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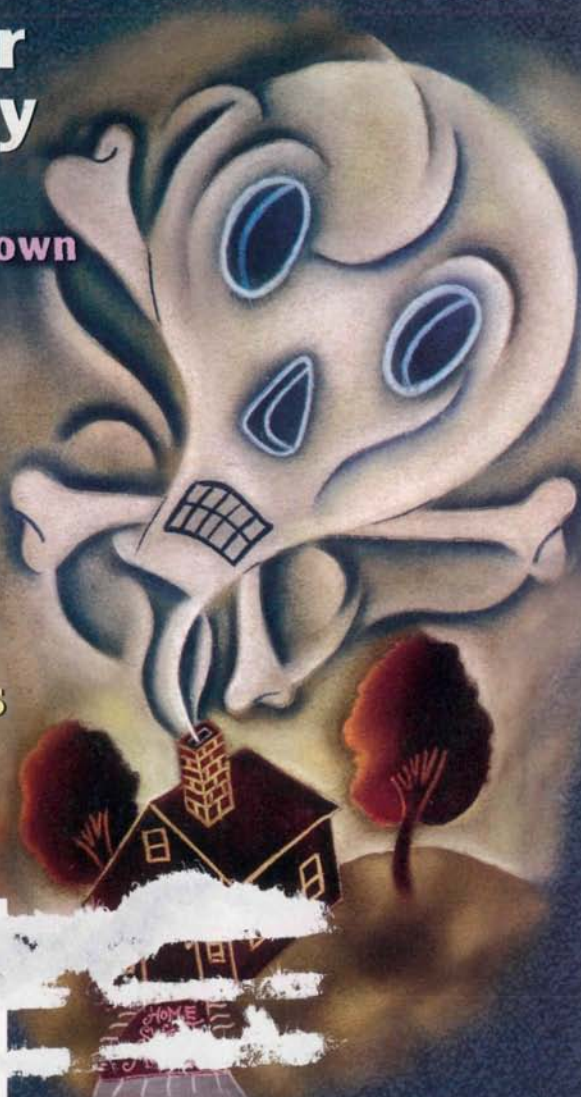
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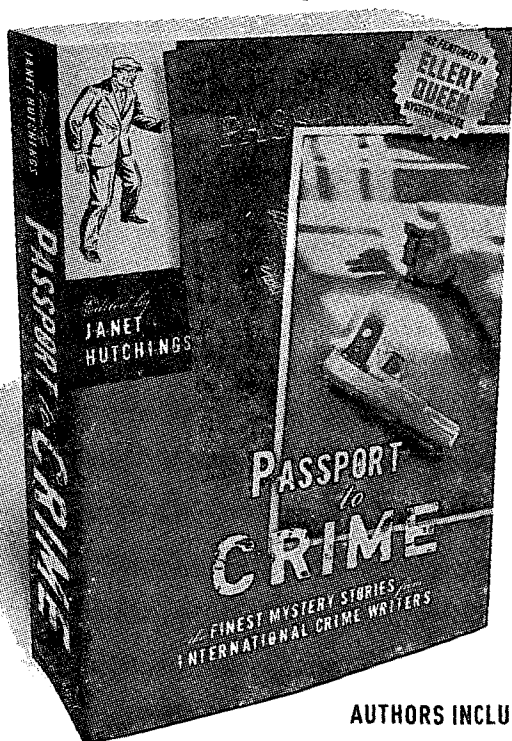
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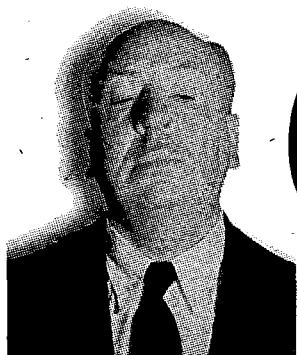


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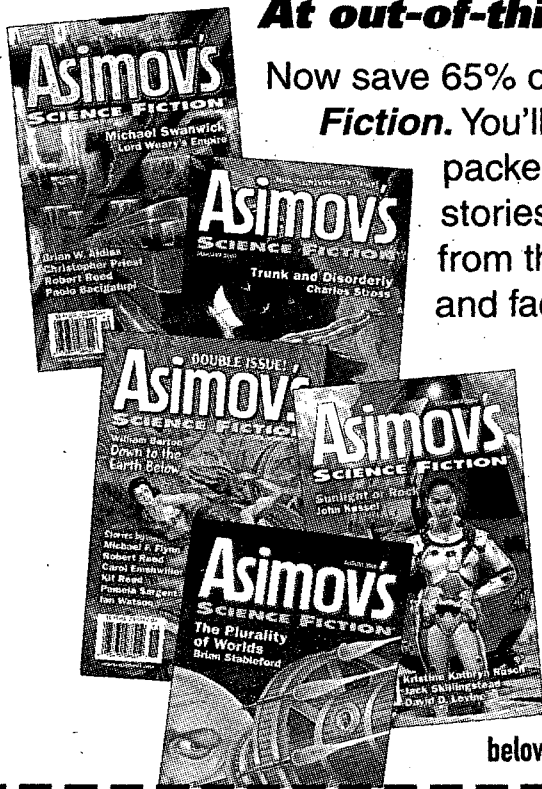


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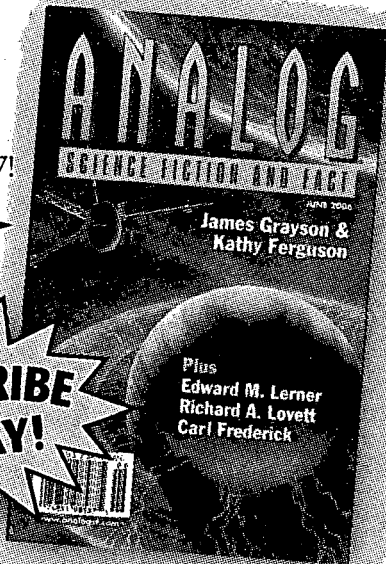
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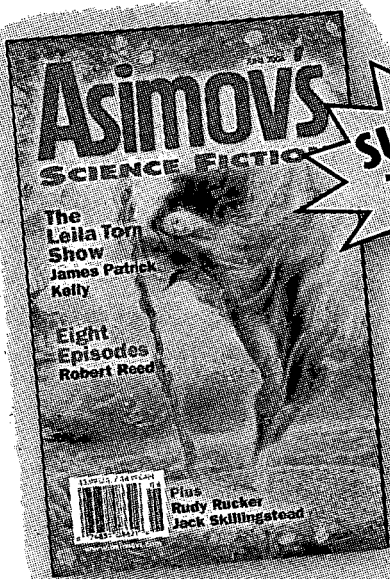
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## EDITOR'S NOTES

LINDA LANDRIGAN

## HAND-CRAFTED CRIME

Intrigue often follows close on the heels of great art. Money, beauty, and the insatiable desire of the collector create a perfect storm of motive. In John C. Boland's story, "The Return of Jasper Kohl," murder is also part of the mix when an art legend returns to a sleepy artists' colony. In Lloyd Biggle, Jr.'s "Drawn from Death," hastily drawn caricatures are the catalysts to solving a series of linked break-ins in London; Biggle presses the artist Max Beerbohm (1872–1956), a contemporary of Oscar Wilde, Henry James, and George Bernard Shaw, into service as a sleuth.

Detective Cyrus Auburn returns in John H. Dirckx's "Not Your Everyday Poison" with a case involving antique furniture—and a long-ago murder—when a restorer takes a taste from a bottle of liquor he finds in an old cabinet. Also returning, Irish bare-knuckle boxer Corey Callaghan makes his way to Cheyenne, where he is making a circuit of western towns, along with his trainer Patrick O'Sullivan and their traveling companion Pandora Parson, when Patrick is accused of killing a local card shark in "Pandora's Defense" by Gilbert M. Stack.

We also have a tender story from Stringfellow Forbes titled "Dishes," and a Max Carrados mystery classic by Ernest Bramah, "The Knight's Cross Signal Problem," in addition to our ever challenging mystery-themed acrostics and our Mysterious Photograph contest. Robert C. Hahn highlights exceptional debut mysteries in his Booked and Printed column, and Steve Hockensmith profiles Peter Weber, the director of the new Hannibal Lecter prequel, *Hannibal Rising*, in his Reel Crime column.

Six great stories and novellas for connoisseurs of the art of murder.

# THE RETURN OF JASPER KOHL

---

JOHN C. BOLAND

**“T**he people Rembrandt painted never bit him,” Tamar Gillespie complained. She stood four feet back, examining her portrait of General Archibald Lee. She had got the arrogant tilt of the head, the curve of the lips, the large dark eyes—but the dignified personality that she had conjured from those features was a lie. Her success as a portraitist depended on *not* painting what she saw as much as on composition and brushwork. In this case, she hadn’t painted the subject’s foul disposition.

“How do you know?” said Edgar Bean, who had his pin-striped arms folded.

“Know what?” Tamar answered. Her thoughts had shifted to whether Edgar would try to whittle down her fee. He was frowning for a reason, perhaps pretending there was something in the painting he didn’t like.

“About Rembrandt,” he said. “That his subjects didn’t bite. You know, some of them refused to pay.”

He was still frowning at the portrait of General Archibald Lee.

“What?” Tamar demanded.

“Oh, nothing, nothing. The painting is very good. The client will love it. The little fellow bit you, did he?”

“Just a nip,” Tamar confessed. “I was trying to get him to stay on the stool.”

“And lift his chin like the noble beast he is.”

“That too.” General Archibald Lee was a purebred King Charles Cavalier spaniel.

“Well, I’m sure the owner will be delighted.” Edgar Bean laid a hand on her shoulder—paternally, Tamar hoped—steering her through the Hologram Gallery, which commanded the highest prices in the high-priced town of Tyler River, Connecticut. Their business relationship was two years old and lucrative for them both. Besides representing Tamar in portraits, which were done on commission, the gallery showed the paintings she did because





she loved her work. The doggie pictures sold. The landscapes, of which she was proudest, stuck to the walls.

"Do you need an advance?" Edgar Bean asked.

"It wouldn't hurt."

It never hurt. Her expenses rolled in faster than her brush moved.

At his desk, Bean drew a large black checkbook from a bottom drawer, paid Tamar half of what she would eventually receive for the portrait. As she folded the check into a jacket pocket, Bean

**L**ake Rehoboth was at the center of her earliest memories, her happiest memories—and her worst ones.

remarked, "I'm beginning to worry about your lake painting. It should have sold by now. Perhaps . . ." He

let the thought hang unfinished and walked to the north wall. She noticed he had moved the canvas to the second room, where the not-so-fresh work hung. Edgar was a greengrocer at heart. He would perk up wilted art with a spritz if he could get away with it. "It's rather gloomy, isn't it?" he said.

"You think?" She had painted it a year ago, when her life was coming apart. Mars black had spilled from the tube like blood at midnight. Hemlock and elms strangled each other. Even the water looked tortured. Placid little Lake Rehoboth had never known waves like those.

The gallery owner raised an eyebrow. He was telling her the painting was taking up wall space that something more commercial could occupy.

"If you want to crate it up, I'll send it down to New York," Tamar said. She met his gaze, or tried to—whether because he was shy or evasive, staring eye to eye with Edgar was impossible. New York was her trump card. A small gallery in TriBeCa also represented her. Edgar would hate the thought of New York selling something he hadn't.

"No rush," he said. His round face, white bearded and pink, wrinkled into a smile. "Perhaps a Stephen King fan will happen by and take it off my hands. In the meantime, I have to get next week's show mounted. So if you will excuse me . . ."

He walked her to the front of the gallery. Framed paintings were stacked facing the wall. It looked like a small show, fewer than twenty canvases.

"Who is it?" Tamar asked.

Edgar had been quiet about the new show. Normally, there would have been posters and cards distributed weeks ago.

"Is it still a secret?" she prodded.

"I'll let you in on it. We have sixteen new works by Jasper Kohl."

"Wow, Edgar!" She didn't pretend she wasn't impressed. "I thought he had given up painting."

She thought he had gone insane, actually. That was the grapevine's version of why the legendary surrealist hadn't had a show in four years.

"He's back at work," Edgar said.

"I'd like to meet him," Tamar said.

"The opening is Tuesday night. You're invited, of course."

She moved toward the nearest painting for a peek.

"No, no, my dear." Edgar intercepted her. "Let's save the surprise."

As she drove home, she replayed the conversation. She hadn't been invited to the opening until she asked to be. That wasn't like Edgar, who surrounded himself with artists like . . . like what? Certainly *not* like a fat gray spider in a circle of wrapped flies. If Edgar had a web, she shared it willingly.

Tamar Gillespie thought Lake Rehoboth was a perfect place to work. After Labor Day, the summer people went home, social obligations faded, and the strident arguments over how the little community should be governed subsided to murmurs. A half dozen other artists lived along the hilly roads surrounding the lake, so there were Sunday plein air expeditions. Her mother lived a quarter mile down the road, in an A-frame overlooking the small grassy dam that kept the lake in place. Her grandfather had lived in one of the first tiny houses built sixty years ago, which he had crammed with political books until the floors creaked. For Tamar, Lake Rehoboth was at the center of her earliest memories, her happiest memories—and her worst ones. It even accommodated her widowhood, dangling promises that the second half of her life might be better than the last several years had been.

Her fame annoyed her. In Tyler River, she was known as the "dog painter." In New York, she was *that* dog painter because the field was crowded. She had done portraits of bank presidents and university benefactors, neurasthenic heirs and ectomorphic children, but dogs had made her career. Michael Satich, the television smile that lit thirty million mornings, had loved the fact Tamar painted his three Pomeranians in an ornate boudoir that a French king would have found comfortable. Tamar never told him she thought the animals deserved a French king's fate.

Michael Satich had a lot of friends who shared his taste. A half dozen commissions followed within a month of the portrait

being hung, and others followed from people who would never be famous but imitated celebrities' style. She had plenty of work that she didn't like, and enough sense to be grateful for it. Her husband's final year had pretty much wiped them out financially. Bills were still coming in, but the collection threats had stopped.

Six more dogs, she thought, and she could start paying down the mortgage she had taken on the house. She had known she was going to lose Dan. She felt awfully selfish knowing she hadn't wanted to lose everything else.

She drove up the hill to her cottage and saw her husband's former partner, Cal Hoover, standing beside a North Fairfield Police cruiser. He was big and unfriendly looking, which she supposed was a good thing for a cop to be these days. Cal and his wife had tried to comfort Tamar as her husband declined, an awkward business for all concerned. It wasn't easy for cop families to separate compassion from their own dread.

"Business or coffee?" she called.

Cal's smile was short lived. "Both, please. Do you know Jean Ann Arnold?"

"Sure. I know her."

"Her husband reported her missing. Said you were with her this morning."

"We were out painting." She glanced at her watch. It was five thirty, the day already getting gray. "That was hours ago."

She pushed open the door, which she never locked, crossed the porch, and started turning on lights. While she heated water for coffee, Cal Hoover asked her about the plein air group's outing.

"Jean Ann should have been home before noon," Tamar said. "We almost didn't get together because it looked like rain, so we stayed on the mountain." She had dropped into the local habit of calling the small, hilly community "the mountain." "We met down at the Arthur Street beach. That was a little after nine. Bobbie Silver had her grandkids coming, so she left around eleven. Nate Perlman, Jean Ann, and I called it quits at about quarter to twelve."

"Did Jean Ann say she was going anywhere?"

"Not to me."

"Who left first?"

"I'm not sure. Jean Ann and I were getting into our cars around the same time. Nate lives just up the hill, so he was walking. I may actually have driven off first."

Having taken off his topcoat, Cal sat comfortably at the breakfast counter and stirred decaf into hot water. He had never known quite what to make of Dan Gillespie's wife. She was



Jewish, like most of the people at Lake Rehoboth, and he told himself that this didn't matter without being sure it was true. The community had been here for a long time, built by New Yorkers who hadn't been able to buy property in much of southern Connecticut in the 1950s because of restrictive deed covenants. He liked having Lake Rehoboth in his jurisdiction because it meant there were about two hundred houses he didn't have to worry about except for an occasional burglary. He knew that the community had been noisily political before his time, with protests for Ethel Rosenberg and against whatever war was going on. But it had quieted, half the first generation were living in Boca Raton or Boynton Beach, and now there were a theater group, a couple of writers, several professional artists, and a handful of people who commuted by rail down to New York.

Dan had been happy with her, the woman he called his red-diaper baby, and that made two guys on the North Fairfield Police force who had had good marriages.

"What do you know about Jean Ann's husband?" Cal asked.

"Bruce Arnold? Good guy, an accountant; he has an office in Tyler River." She frowned at him. "She's only been missing six hours. What's this about?"

His big head tilted. "We like to believe North Fairfield delivers a superior police product. And Mr. Arnold's first call was to the chief."

"She could have gone to a movie."

"Or met a boyfriend." Cal raised his brows as he made the suggestion.

Tamar could only shrug.

"You two aren't close," he said.

She settled down on the stool across from him. "We don't share secrets." Before he could nudge her again, she said, "Jean Ann said something to my mother once. She thought Mom should be upset that I'd married Dan. He wasn't Jewish. And he was a cop."

"A bad combination," said Cal, who wasn't Jewish and was a cop.

"She doesn't mean any harm, but sometimes she's silly. Her parents were labor lawyers. To them, cops were oppressors of the working man, strike breakers. We enjoy painting together, but we don't talk politics. Or men."

Cal's phone rang. He said, "Okay, I'll be there." He got up. "Mrs. Arnold's car turned up."

"Where?"

"About a half mile from here. Do you want to come?"



"Is there a path here?" Cal asked, stepping around the green sedan that was nosed between clumps of mountain laurel a dozen yards off Esther Road.

Tamar pointed ahead to rising land in which gray stripes of ledge poked through tawny weeds. The weeds had the beaten-down look of a deer trail that led through a corridor of sparse hemlock.

"We call it the Nature Trail," Tamar said. "It goes back about two miles to a beaver pond."

It was getting dark. Cal asked, "Would someone go up there to paint?"

"Yes."

"You've done it?"

"Many times."

"Is it safe?"

"The hills aren't very steep. If you see any wildlife, it's mostly deer." She glanced at him. "You could break an ankle."

He turned to a uniformed woman who had been canvassing the area. "Get out the flashlights. Mrs. Gillespie will lead us. We may have to get more people up here. It's supposed to be cold tonight."

It was full dark forty minutes later when a flash beam picked up a waterlogged plaid shirt half submerged in the shallows of the pond. Tamar looked away from the awful sight. Jean Ann's sketch pad fluttered on a glacial rock twenty feet above the water.

Shaken, Tamar stopped at her mother's house. She was thirty-six years old, and she still retreated here when the world turned ugly. Dorothy Hirsch had been a teacher, and then for a couple of years when Tamar was a teenager a struggling divorcee, until a new career selling real estate took off. Twenty years later, Tamar had trouble remembering her mother as a tough-minded saleswoman. Somehow she had become frail and old.

"It looks like Jean Ann slipped off the rock," Tamar explained. "She may have been there since noon."

"Do you think she could have run into somebody?"

Tamar understood. Groups of motorcyclists, mostly benign, roared along Route 7 on weekend afternoons. Strangers sometimes drove up an old logging road within a half mile of the pond to use drugs or shoot bottles. As her mother got older, minor dangers on the periphery worried her more. It occurred to Tamar that their roles were gradually reversing. She didn't know if she would ever be the source of comfort her mother had been. She did her best to allay the older woman's concern.

"Jean Ann's wallet was in her paint box. It looks like an accident."

"That's terrible," Dorothy Hirsch said, then with the bluntness Tamar had always admired, said, "I'm sorry I didn't like her better."

From her own porch, bundled in a cable-knit over fleece, Tamar watched the headlights come down from Esther Road. There was a streetlight near the automatic gate that kept the little community private, and she counted three marked police vehicles, a couple of cars that looked official but weren't rigged with light bars, and a medical examiner's truck. She wondered how Bruce Arnold was taking the death of his wife. There were grown children somewhere on the East Coast, and two of Jean Ann's sisters lived nearby. The presence of family relieved Tamar of any guilt over not offering Bruce her help or condolences. She could do that in the next couple of days, when the first outpouring of sympathy from other Lake Rehoboth families had run its course. By ten or eleven o'clock tonight, the Arnold refrigerator would be full of tuna casseroles and roast chicken. By the middle of the week, Bruce Arnold would be wondering what to do with the deli platters, rugelach, and babkas. Christians sent flowers. Jews sent food. Jean Ann had brought over a roast chicken after Dan died.

She heard the phone ringing and ignored it. The whole mountain was back-and-forthing tonight. "Did you hear? So awful." *Yisgadad v'yiskadash sh'me rabba*. So began the Mourners' Kaddish.

Not much more than a year ago, it had been Tamar's turn to be the talk of the mountain. *How will she ever get on? The woman's an artist, not a practical bone in her body. . . . Doesn't so-and-so have an unmarried brother?*

She smiled without much bitterness. She had met so-and-so's unmarried brother, who was forty-eight and wrote stories for comic books. Where had he been all her life?

**J**asper Kohl's new paintings dazzled her. The huge, complex cityscapes had a haunted emptiness, as if the towers and plazas had been built for people who had left no mark. Light echoed through vacant offices. Shadows spilled through afternoon streets, extending jagged angles like claws. Standing with a glass of champagne that she had forgotten, Tamar marveled at Kohl's technique and shivered at his vision.

The man of the evening huddled in a wheelchair at the back of the Hologram Gallery, legs covered in an Irish blanket, only

the sharp black eyes moving in a slack, wintry face. The mix of visitors at the opening was about half professional, half collectors, and Edgar Bean was coddling the collectors while largely leaving the artists to hiss at each other. Jasper Kohl was never alone. On his one side stood a strong-looking woman who had the dominatrix manner of a caregiver. Guarding the other flank was a small, half bald man in a dark suit.

She ignored his minders and presented herself to Kohl.

"We met once before," she said, "when I was in school. You gave a lecture in New Haven."

His thin mouth gaped, and a feeble voice emerged. "With pretty students like you, I should have taught full time." He grasped her hand. His clawed fist trembled but was strong for a man who was past eighty years old. Tamar had read up on Kohl's career. His first solo show had been at the Weil Gallery in Paris in the 1950s. For a few years, he had been a darling of French intellectuals. At that time, Kohl was painting hyperrealistic nudes in forest settings, which the intellectuals thought commented on man's plight—or woman's, in most cases—in nature. When Kohl replied that forest greens complemented flesh colors, thereby rejecting interpretation, the intellectuals adored him even more. Empty cities had worked their way into his pictures when he was in his sixties. Gradually the flesh disappeared and only the bones of structure remained. Coming from an aged artist, the message of decay seemed clear to critics who discovered Jasper Kohl anew.

His grin was slightly lascivious. Even in his sixties, when Tamar heard him speak, Kohl had supposedly been a great seducer of young women.

"What did I say?" he demanded.

"You said that since one can't kill critics, it's best to ignore them."

A finger stroked the cleft under his nose. "No, that's wrong. I would have said one cannot kill *all* the critics. It's possible to dispose of one or two." His head twitched leftward, toward Edgar Bean. "Gallery owners, too, when the opportunity arises."

He didn't seem to be kidding. Tamar said, "The police would object."

"They shouldn't, when it's such a good cause. Does Beanie represent you?"

"Yes."

"What sort of work?"

"I do portraits."

"That requires a disciplined eye. He's a thief, you know."

"He's always been fair to me."

"He cheats his customers. I don't know about the artists. I



haven't had an exhibit in a while."

"I'm glad you're working again."

"That's kind of you." Jasper Kohl scratched his chin, where a few bristles had eluded the razor. "My memory isn't what it used to be. Did you ever pose for me?"

"No, I didn't."

"You're very pretty. I hoped I would remember."

There was bump at her elbow, and Nate Perlman said, "Good evening, Tams."

As Tamar turned, her neighbor from the lake stood large and brash, filling a double-breasted navy blazer, with a faded pink cravat at his throat and his sometimes unruly black beard trimmed almost to the skin. His scrubbing up hadn't been thorough. His hair needed cutting, and the points of his blazer's lapels were worn thin, exposing white threads. At least he wasn't spotted with paint. The young man was Tamar's only neighbor who tried to make a living at the easel. His technical skills were fine, but his manner when it came to selling his work was hopeless. When a socialite had wanted to buy one of his landscapes because it suited her upholstery, Nate Perlman had said he would sooner burn the painting.

"How are you doing, Jasper?" he asked.

Jasper Kohl's black eyes fixed on the young man. "Do I know you, sir?"

Chuckling, Nate shook his head. "I've admired your work for years, Jasper."

"That's gratifying." The old man's voice was cold. "But even my captors here, philistines though they are—" He didn't bother looking at the dominatrix or the small man on his other side. "—address me as Mr. Kohl."

"They have to take orders," Nate said flippantly. "They're hired help." He winked at Tamar and moved away. The dominatrix glared after him.

As Edgar Bean arrived with a prosperous-looking couple in tow, Tamar surrendered her claim on the old artist and went back to the paintings. Edgar had priced the sixteen new Jasper Kohls for their scarcity as well as their other merits. The smallest painting was priced at more than a hundred thousand dollars. Tamar felt a twinge of envy. If she could get those rates for her own work, a single canvas would dig her out of her financial hole. She wondered what the old man had meant in saying Edgar Bean cheated his customers. She also wondered at Nate Perlman's rudeness. Anyone who believed artists were sensitive people had never met Nate.



The show sold out before the evening was over. Tamar left before then but read the bubbly news in the next day's *Tyler River Times*. The famous surrealist's show had brought in more than two and a half million. Tamar spent two days on a portrait of a Jack Russell terrier named Bonaparte, got to the point of adding a Prussian blue glaze to the shadows, which amused her more than it should have, and drove over to spend Shabbas evening with her mother and friends. Ruth and Cubby Stone had walked down Esther Road and, keeping to Sabbath observance, would walk home after dinner. Tamar, to her mother's growing disapproval, would drive.

Over coffee, Jean Ann Arnold became Topic A. Ruth Stone, a gray sparrow with a drinker's voice, announced that funeral services for Jean Ann had been delayed.

"Why's that?" Tamar's mother asked.

"The medical examiner hasn't released the body. The family is upset about what's being done . . . the autopsy."

Some religious Jews objected to autopsies, which disfigured the dead. Tamar knew the Arnolds weren't religious, but it was easy to imagine them being upset.

Cubby Stone set down his spoon. He was a retired philosophy professor who often larded his conversation with names Tamar didn't recognize. Tonight he had a forced cheerfulness, as if he'd found that intellectual rituals explained only so much of life, and not the parts that disturbed him. Those had to be laughed at. "They can keep my cadaver for as long as they want," he said. His wife barely smiled.

"Why are they holding Jean Ann's body?" Tamar asked.

"Her husband doesn't know," said Ruth Stone. "We saw him yesterday. The kids have come in. Both sisters. An uncle flew down from Boston. Poor Bruce had made all the arrangements with the Burial Society. Then—" She threw up her hands. "—then nada. The police aren't telling Bruce a thing."

Tamar's mother glanced across the table. "Do you think you could find out, dear?"

"No, I don't." For Tamar to call Cal Hoover would be presuming on their friendship. She measured her words. "I'm sure the medical examiner isn't doing this to upset the family."

Ruth Stone smiled sourly. "You would say that."

Edgar Bean's voice on the telephone was full of astonishment as he told Tamar that he had sold her gruesome landscape. The buyer had paid the asking price.

"That's wonderful," Tamar said. She felt sometimes that she wasn't really finished with a painting until it hung on someone else's wall, and this was one she had wanted to be done with. If the painting was sold, the emotions that had fueled it could be laid to rest. They already had receded.

"I don't even have to worry about the buyer's check clearing," Edgar said. "Your new admirer is Jasper Kohl."

"I'm flattered," Tamar said. "Did Mr. Kohl say why he liked the painting?"

"Actually, his doctor made the transaction for him. You remember Dr. Wendt from the opening?"

One of Kohl's two caretakers, she thought vaguely. The image of the small, half bald man had faded in her memory.

"Kohl wants you to come to dinner at his house," Edgar said. "You're invited for Wednesday. I accepted for you."

She hung up the phone feeling almost solvent.

Tuesday morning, Cal Hoover phoned ten minutes before arriving at her door. "Hope I'm not disrupting things," he said. It was a perfunctory apology. His mind was on business. "I wanted to ask you something about the Arnold woman. What sort of paint did she work with?"

"You mean oils, watercolors, acrylics?"

"Yeah, that's a good start."

"Well, I never saw her use acrylic paint. A lot of us don't like it because it dries too fast. It's hell on brushes. When Jean Ann worked in her studio, she mostly used oils."

"How do you know that?"

"She showed a number of her paintings at the local art fair. She was a pretty good landscape artist. When she was with us outdoors, she usually brought oils—but sometimes used watercolors."

"You use both oils and watercolors, right?"

"Not much watercolor except for sketches." Tamar wondered where he was leading.

"Can you show me your paint?"

She took him onto the insulated porch that she used most of the year as a studio. An electric radiator ticked beneath a broad window that looked down the hill. Tubes of oil paint were lined up on a worktable and in the trays on the two easels she used. The watercolors were in a canvas bag, but he didn't seem interested in them.

"Is any of this stuff dangerous?"

She looked around the studio, thinking. "In different ways, a lot of it is. You want to tell me what this is about?"

He shook his head. "What's dangerous?"

"Most solvents are both flammable and toxic, in varying degrees. Shall I tell you about the flammable part?"

"No."

"All right. A lot of art materials, particularly the solvents we use to mix paint or clean brushes, are poisonous. People who paint with oils often become sensitized to gum turpentine. You breathe the fumes, absorb the liquid into your skin. I use a mineral spirits alternative, and I still wear rubber gloves for protection. There are several brands of water-based oil paints, which get around that problem."

He was reading the back of a gallon can as she talked. "What else?"

"What do you mean, *what else*?"

"What else is toxic?"

"You name it—Venice turpentine, copal, stand oil, Japan drier, black oil. They're all lethal if you drink them—pretty bad if you breathe the fumes. Some varnish would knock you off your feet if you didn't have a ventilator fan going." She ran out of patience. "What's this about, Cal?"

"The M.E. didn't like the look of Arnold's skin, so he ran a tox screen. She had a high concentration of something that shouldn't have been there. I wonder where she got it. What's this one?"

"Let me look at the label." She took the small bottle. "It's poppy oil, useful if you want a cracked surface on a painting in a couple of years. Most painters don't, so we don't use it much. You could pour this on a salad and eat it if you wanted to. What showed up in Jean Ann?"

"That's supposed to be confidential."

"Cal, a lot of things in an artist's studio are toxic. Some, like the benzene that used to be in rubber cement, are both toxic and narcotic. Some are cumulative poisons."

"What about metallic compounds?"

She made a take-your-pick gesture at the tubes of paint. "Flake white, which a lot of artists still use because of its opacity, contains lead carbonate. Bad stuff. Naples yellow contains antimony. Cobalt and cadmium are both poisonous. So is chromium. But you know, most of us don't lick paint off our fingers. That's about the only way to get a big dose of a chemical . . ."

The way her voice trailed off made him turn around.

"But not the only way?"

"Well . . . sanding would be a possibility."

"Sanding?"

"Someone who's painting thin can't always just cover up a



mistake. I use a fine grade abrasive paper and sand down the problem, then repaint. If there's something toxic in the old paint, it would get released in the sanding dust."

"Much of it?"

"No. You'd have to do a tremendous amount of sanding to get a bad dose of these metals. Not that you would want to inhale any of them. But now that I'm thinking about it, there's another way. All paint starts out as a solid. The pigment gets ground into a powder, then mixed with linseed oil or something similar. The powder can become airborne."

"Would an artist have the powder?"

"It's possible. Some people grind their own pigments. I can't imagine Jean Ann bothering. Most of us use store-boughts." She looked at him sharply. "Jean Ann didn't have arsenic in her system?"

Cal turned his head. "Why arsenic?"

"I just remembered that some obsolete colors were made with really dangerous things. There's one called king's yellow that employed arsenic trisulfide. It's amazing that painters in the seventeenth century didn't die younger."

"How do you know about early paints?"

"The school I went to used some very old-fashioned methods, what we call Old Masters' techniques."

He smiled and asked too casually, "What about copper arsenite?"

She stared at him, her mind clicking through old lessons. "Emerald green," she said with a touch of awe.

"Would Arnold have used that?"

"Not unless she was crazy."

Tamar pulled a thick book off a shelf, flipped pages. "According to *The Artist's Handbook*, emerald green is a brilliant green made from copper acetoarsenite, which is highly poisonous. It says here the chemical is sold as an insecticide as 'Paris green.' This edition is a few years old. I don't know if that stuff is still on the market."

"It is," Cal said.

"Was Jean Ann poisoned with copper acetoarsenite?"

"She had it in her system." Cal's answer seemed evasive. "Thanks for the help. I've got to go serve a search warrant on the widower. I wanted to be sure what I was looking for."

"You might find a tube of paint marked 'emerald green,' but it would use some modern substitute material. The real thing hasn't been used in more than a century."

"The warrant is pretty broad," Cal responded. "'Toxic chemicals' in general. I'll scoop up anything in her studio that looks green and let the lab see what's in it. Also anything that looks

like insecticide. You said she would be crazy to use it, right?"

Tamar nodded. "Besides being dangerous, it wasn't lightfast and it changed color in mixtures. A landscape artist has lots of modern greens available. She wouldn't have needed this one."

He hesitated on the front step. "How did Mr. and Mrs. Arnold get along?"

"Okay, I think," Tamar said. She heard the doubtful note in her voice. It implied, *How does anyone get along?* Suddenly she felt like a betrayer, like an informer, like all the things someone in Jean Ann's family might expect a cop's widow to be. Before she had always been able to reject their suspicions. Now she wasn't so sure.

But if Cal Hoover found emerald green in Jean Ann's studio, he would be right to ask how it got there.

"I'm not going to give away your secrets," Tamar said. "Did Jean Ann die of poisoning?"

"She had a lot of copper arsenite in her body. She died of a broken neck."

"From the fall?"

"That's possible," Cal said.

She hadn't felt deeply depressed in months, but her conversation with the police detective left her sad. She didn't like her role in Cal Hoover's inquiry, and she didn't like the direction the investigation was leading. A woman's death was bad enough. This was heading toward the destruction of a family.

Tamar bundled up and drove down to the lake with her portable easel. It was a sunny, cold day, and she was able to work up a half dozen washes of bare trees and reflective water before Nate Perlman saw her from his house and walked down to the shore.

"Let's resume the plein air group next week," he suggested. The painters hadn't met on Sunday.

"If it's okay with you and Bobbie, I'm available," Tamar said.

"Yeah." He chucked a rock far out into the lake. "I hear the police are still investigating Jean Ann's death."

Tamar glanced at the bearded young man. "I don't know anything."

He raised his hands. "I wouldn't ask." But he had her attention. "You didn't like Jean Ann much, did you?"

"What are you getting at?"

"Nothing, Tams. It's just funny, you know. Somebody dies and you start thinking about all the people who didn't like him—or her. Not thinking that anyone did anything about it, but just

wondering what the person would have been like if she knew how people felt about her." He turned his gloomy look away. "Jean Ann wasn't the easiest person to like."

"Not many of us are," Tamar said.

"Oh, you pretty much get along with everyone. I ask advice on a painting, you give me ideas on how to make it better—and convince me I thought of them. When someone on the community board throws a fit, people count on Tamar to calm the person down. You get them focused on the project, and they forget to be pissed off."

"You make me sound manipulative."

"No, constructive. You ask for Jean Ann's advice, she would peel the skin off your ego."

"Is your ego that vulnerable?"

"And how! Underneath this big, hairy exterior, I'm easily wounded."

Despite herself, Tamar smiled. "I can tell," she said.

**J**asper Kohl's house was more modest than she had expected, a cedar-shingled cape forty minutes up Route 7. There were a couple of hospitals nearby, on the edge of a mill town that hadn't gentrified. Answering the door, Brunhilde ushered her inside with obvious reluctance. "Dr. Wendt thinks this is a bad idea," the caregiver said. "Mr. Kohl is excitable."

She was at least six feet tall, with long hair tied into a rope down her back; heavy arms, long straight legs. Not quite one of the Rhine Maidens, Tamar thought—in fact, not a maiden at all. She appeared to be in her fifties and wore a wedding band.

"Perhaps I should go," Tamar said.

A frail voice from the hallway said, "That's enough, Mrs. Diehl! . . . Welcome, young lady! Don't let my captors scare you away."

Jasper Kohl's motorized chair halted a dozen feet from them. "Fetch Mrs. Gillespie a drink, Diehl! It's freezing out. This way, my dear."

In a bow-windowed dining room, Tamar's landscape hung above the fireplace mantel. The short man with thinning hair and glasses who studied the painting was dressed immaculately in a navy pin-stripe suit, with tiny squares of gold at his cuffs. When he turned, she recognized him, though there was nothing memorable in the small, placid face. His blue eyes were shrunken by rimless lenses. If she tried to paint him, her eye would wander looking for a focal point.

"I'm Paul Wendt," he said, offering a hand. "Mr. Kohl admires your work immensely."

"We have a similarly bleak view of human existence," Kohl said. The old artist had wheeled in silently beside her. "Mrs. Gillespie's work displays the winter of her soul. Wendt here believes he can conjure up a sunny disposition in anyone with talk and drugs. Hasn't worked for me, has it, Witch Doctor?"

"Some patients resist being helped," Wendt responded. "Mr. Kohl believes that if he isn't suicidal, he has nothing creative to give the world. Exactly the opposite is true. Artistic expression is essentially an affirmation of life."

"Listen to that," Kohl whispered to Tamar. "What affirmation do you think this charlatan reads into your lake painting?"

"A struggle is an affirmation," the doctor said, unperturbed. "Mrs. Gillespie was struggling to get past her family tragedy. You should be more sympathetic, Mr. Kohl. Before you began treatments, you hadn't worked in years."

The old man's head ducked in acknowledgment. A small, dark woman rolled a cart into the room, set plates on the table, filled wineglasses, and withdrew. The meal was light, parsley potatoes, a small fish fillet, two stalks each of asparagus. Tamar had forgotten since her grandfather's death how little very old people ate. Kohl seemed to begrudge his body nourishment, pushing around the poached fish as if eating it would support Wendt's contention.

"Is your studio here?" Tamar asked.

Kohl's hand trembled as he lowered his fork. "There's a converted garage out back that my keepers let me use. This dump is sort of my halfway house. Halfway between the normal world and the loony bin. Isn't that right, Doc?"

"Mr. Kohl needed a gradual transition. Fortunately, we found this property for rent."

"And Wendt's booby hatch is just down the road, in case they need to send me back." Kohl's sharp, dark glance darted between the doctor and Brunhilde.

"That won't be necessary," Wendt said. "You're doing fine. Irascible as ever. That's a form of affirmation too."

"May I see your studio?" Tamar asked.

The old artist grinned. "I have a few works in progress—but they're top secret. I suppose it's too cold to ask you to pose for me?"

The glint in his eye was practiced, knowing, and almost charming. If he asked her a few more times . . . She had never been shy about posing when she was in college, but she remembered how long ago that had been.

"It's too cold," Tamar said.

Kohl sighed. "I painted my late wife so often that there was a time when I could do her from memory. All those figures sprawled in the forest were Edith. But the mind isn't so sharp anymore. The fact is, I often can't recall what I'm working on till I see it in my studio." His smile was bitter. "I would advise you not to get old, if you have a choice in the matter. Now I'm afraid it's my bedtime."

While Brunhilde tended to Kohl, Dr. Wendt escorted Tamar to the door.

"I can see your concern for Jasper," Wendt said. "He really is on the road to recovery. I'm certain he won't mind if I tell you the background. Jasper came to see me four years ago. He had fallen into a depression after the death of his wife. You appreciate how difficult that transition can be. Especially the first year, thoughts of joining the lost one are common. Jasper's situation was worse than many. He and Edith had been together since their Paris days, more than fifty years ago. His depression deepened, despite therapy. We had to hospitalize him for eighteen months, but the last year has been good. The reception of his paintings at the Hologram Gallery has buoyed his spirits tremendously."

"I'm glad," Tamar said.

Driving home on the dark Route 7, Tamar thought that if this was the revived Jasper Kohl, the depressed man must have been melancholy indeed. Her own marriage had lasted nine years. To Tamar, the void left by a fifty-year bond was unfathomable. As black as her moods had been after Dan died, she had never felt tempted to end her own life. She hadn't been certain whether that was evidence of her strength or selfishness. She just knew that whatever else happened, she wanted to go on.

When she got home, the phone was ringing. "We arrested Bruce Arnold this afternoon," Cal Hoover told her. "There was a two-pound bag of Paris green insecticide in the garage. So far, he's been charged with attempted murder of his wife. If she fainted at the pond and fell, we may be able to make it murder."

It was the last thing Tamar wanted to hear. "What does Bruce say?"

"He got his lawyer involved. They're going to sue the department for false arrest."

"No offense, Cal, but I hope you're wrong."

"I know, but we're not."

The news was already making the rounds of the mountain. Her mother called, then Ruth Stone, then Nate Perlman.



"I need to talk to you," Nate said. "Tonight."

"It's almost ten."

"This won't take long. It's important."

He arrived ten minutes later.

"I hate to give the cops ammunition," Nate said, rubbing his beard, "but Jean Ann was having an affair with a guy down in New York."

"How do you know?"

"She told me. The romance went south, and she was angry. She told me all about her boyfriend, and about Jasper Kohl, and—"

"What's Jasper got to do with this?"

"He's a total fraud, Tams."

"What do you mean?"

"Jean Ann knew all about him. He has other people doing his work."

"His paintings?"

"Yes, what else? You're not very observant. You haven't noticed how his hand shakes? Do you think he could paint the kind of work hanging in that gallery?"

The paintings flashed into her mind. They were technically wonderful examples of a style called hyperrealism, images rendered "realer than real." The work required superb skill and steadiness.

"What did Jean Ann tell you?"

"Her boyfriend got the gig to ghost this batch of Kohl's paintings. The guy came up from New York, worked in the old man's studio. At most, Jasper provided some rough drawings."

"Do you believe Jean Ann?"

"Once I saw the shape Jasper's in, it made sense. Also, Jean Ann was badmouthing a guy who'd dumped her—that fit too."

"I didn't know she had a boyfriend."

"You weren't her confidante," Nate said.

"Do you know if Bruce knew?"

"Why else would he kill her?"

"We don't know that he did," Tamar insisted. "What about the boyfriend, do you know his name?"

"Baldwin or something like that. He teaches down in New York."

She considered Nate's story. Deception was a tradition in the art world. Old masters had let apprentices paint the backgrounds of commissioned works, sometimes much more; often the closest a modern expert could come to attributing a painting was to say it came from the "studio of" a great name.

Without Jasper Kohl's name attached, the surreal cityscapes would have drawn a fraction of the prices Edgar Bean's customers paid.

"Nate, did she say if Edgar knew the new paintings weren't Jasper's?" She remembered the old man saying that Edgar Bean cheated his customers. But it made no sense—he was hinting at his own deception.

"She didn't say anything to me about that."

"Why haven't you told anyone?"

He snorted. "I don't have high illusions about this business, Tams. Dribble paint on paper, put a big name on it, and you can find twenty critics to say it's a work of genius. Personally, I like seeing art scams run as long as they can. People who buy the stuff deserve what they get."

"But you intend to tell the police that Jean Ann had an affair?"

He shrank. "I was hoping you would do that."

Edgar Bean had two checks for her. She stopped at the gallery in the morning. The Jasper Kohl paintings remained on the wall, each frame discreetly bearing a SOLD sticker. Regardless of who had executed them, they were brilliant works. Watching Edgar write her check, she wondered how much he knew.

"How did you get along with Jasper?" Edgar asked, looking up.

"Pretty well."

"He's cantankerous."

"He directed it at his doctor." She hesitated. Her relationship with Edgar was critically important. Without the commissions, she would have sunk beneath Dan's medical bills. It could still happen. If she blew the whistle on Jasper, she could kiss goodbye any work from the Hologram Gallery. Even if Edgar had been innocently duped, he wouldn't appreciate having his name attached to a scandal. Her dealer in New York wouldn't be happy either. Rocking the boat was bad for any business. The last thing an art dealer wanted was customers thinking twice about what they were buying.

But she couldn't leave things as they were. "Edgar, do you know an art teacher in New York named Baldwin?"

"Planning to brush up on your technique?" Smiling, he handed her the checks. "The name doesn't ring a bell. If you've got any more tortured landscapes, bring them in. Seems there's a market after all."

At home, she called the TriBeCa gallery, whose proprietor Liz Kimmel said she thought there was a teacher at a downtown atelier named Baldwin.

Tamar did an Internet search on "NY Atelier Baldwin" and got not only a hit for a Ted Baldwin at the Atelier Pigalle but also a Web site displaying his paintings. She clicked through a dozen of

them. The portraits and marine art had none of Jasper Kohl's surreal disquiet. Some were loosely painted, others almost photographic in their realism; several portraits had the lighting and heavy glazes of Rembrandt. Ted Baldwin seemed to claim no particular style as his own. He was a classically trained artist who could do anything.

Imitating Jasper Kohl would be well within his ability.

There was a phone number on the Web site. She dialed it, got a recording that said the mailbox was full. She tried Atelier Pigalle. The young man who answered said Mr. Baldwin wasn't available.

"Are you a student?" he asked.

"Actually—"

"We really don't know when he's going to be back. But Dean Granger is filling in, so if you've got a class there won't be a refund."

"Ah, gee," said Tamar.

She hung up, wondering how much Ted Baldwin had received to ghost sixteen canvases for Jasper. Enough to ditch both his middle-aged girlfriend and his job? She phoned Cal Hoover's office, ended up leaving a voicemail. He probably wouldn't care about art forgery anyway, when he was working a murder case.

**S**he sat in her car a mile down the road from Jasper Kohl's house and phoned the nearby hospital. Was Dr. Wendt available? A receptionist said he was on his rounds. Tamar drove to the house.

Brunhilde answered the door.

"I need to speak to Mr. Kohl," Tamar said.

"The doctor doesn't want him to be disturbed," the woman said.

"This is important."

"You'll have to get approval from Dr. Wendt." The woman slammed the door.

Tamar went back to her car. Through the bare trees, she saw a small outbuilding connected to the cottage by a wooden ramp. She parked a quarter mile down the road and came back through the woods. It took Tamar only a minute to unlock the door and slip into Jasper Kohl's studio. As she looked around, she was disappointed. Several easels stood empty under a skylight. A dozen untouched canvases were stacked against a wall. A worktable held brushes, jars of solvent, and tubes of paint that looked long neglected.

Jasper had said he had several works in progress, but there was no sign of painting being done by anyone.

It was bitterly cold in the small studio. She switched on an electric heater near an easel. As the coils reddened, she poked around in drawers under the table. Pads of yellowed paper lay in a clutter of graphite sticks and eraser dirt. Opening a pad, she found dozens of studies—buildings, human figures; the most recent of those that were dated was more than five years old. The shapes were tremulous. Tamar imagined the wizened hand that had juddered across the paper.

There were racks for storing wet paintings at the back of the room. Far back in one section, where it might not have been noticed, was a canvas. She pulled it out. In bold colors and realer-than-real detail, it was a portrait of Jasper Kohl. That it had been intended to pass for a self-portrait was obvious: The subject held a brush in his hand, and an easel leaned into the scene behind him. Unfortunately, the artist had done too good a job capturing Kohl's decayed state. You only had to look at the brilliant execution and its subject to know this wasn't a self-portrait. There was a subtler clue. A mirror hung in the shadows of the painted scene, from which stared a youngish, blond-haired man with a mocking smile. Ted Baldwin, she presumed.

She heard a thump and through a slatted blind saw Kohl wheeling down the ramp from the house. He wore a frayed sweater, a knit cap, and had a blanket on his lap. He stopped the wheelchair, worked the lock, and the door swung free. When he saw Tamar, his flinty eyes widened. The chair bumped over the threshold. He pushed the door closed.

"Come to pose after all?" His smile was harsh.

"There's not enough heat in here, Jasper. I would be one big goose bump."

He wore wool gloves that left the finger tips bare. "Too cold for me to paint anyway. I came down to look at my work. Didn't realize I had invited company."

"Jasper, we need to talk."

He nodded. "I know. I figured you'd come to me for help. I'm not taking students, but I'll be delighted to give you pointers. Did you bring any work for me to see?"

"Not this afternoon. But there's another painting I would like you to look at." Returning to the racks, she brought out the bright portrait. "Did you do this, Jasper?"

He frowned. His glance wandered to the worktable, then back to the painting. Watching the struggle on his face, Tamar felt as cruel as if she had dumped him from the wheelchair. She had

admired Kohl—had even envied his artist's life, which had all those years in Paris when he could snub the critics who celebrated him.

"Jasper?"

"I would have to ask Dr. Wendt," he said, sighing. "He helps me when I forget."

She spoke gently. "Had you forgotten the paintings in your latest show?"

As he looked away, she saw a glint of tears in his eyes.

"Do you remember Ted Baldwin? He's an artist, like us."

He was silent.

"Jasper?"

The voice from behind made her jump. "What are you doing to him!"

Brunhilde filled the doorway.

"We're just talking art," Tamar said, smiling. The big woman had murder in her eyes.

"I saw you sneak in here," the caregiver said. "What are you looking for?"

"Nothing," Tamar said. She was watching the doorway, hoping the big woman would step to the side and create an opening. And then she did just that, two half steps, making way for Paul Wendt. The drab little psychiatrist wore an overcoat and carried a small black bag.

"I came as quickly as I could, Mrs. Diehl," he said. "What have we here?"

"She's snooping."

"How impolite. What for?"

"She won't say."

Tamar tried her charm on Wendt. "It's a misunderstanding, Dr. Wendt. Jasper called and invited me down, and—"

Wendt snapped at Diehl: "Have you been giving Kohl his medicine?"

"Yes, of course. He can't use the phone. She's lying."

A clawed hand touched hers and Tamar jumped. Jasper smiled benignly at her. "Remember, you asked about our artist friend—Mr. Baldy."

His caregivers traded glances.

"She knows something about Baldwin," Brunhilde accused.

"Shut up, you idiot."

"No, I won't. We've got to deal with this."

Wendt asked calmly, "Why were you asking about someone named Baldwin, Mrs. Gillespie? Who is Baldwin?"

Jasper Kohl's voice crackled. "He's an artist—I told you!"



Wendt didn't take his eyes off Tamar. "I think you'd better tell me why you care about this Baldwin person."

His dissembling was so clumsy that Tamar couldn't hide her scorn. "You must know the name, doctor. You hired Ted Baldwin to make paintings in Jasper's name."

"That's ludicrous."

"No, it's pretty smart. You probably cleared two million dollars on the scheme. Jasper couldn't have arranged it any more than he could have done the paintings. As long as you keep him drugged, he's happy to believe the work is his own. Now, if you get out of my way, I'm going home."

Neither Mrs. Diehl nor the doctor moved.

"You see," the woman said.

"Yes, I see." Wendt's hand dipped into his black bag. "Take her arm, Mrs. Diehl."

The big woman came around the wheelchair, and Tamar retreated. She bumped the worktable, scrambled around it. Diehl approached from the left, Wendt from the right. Tamar searched the table for a weapon. A palette knife would be nice. She lifted a small bottle of brush cleaner and pitched it at Diehl's head. The woman evaded the missile. Wendt rushed her, stabbing a syringe at Tamar's thigh. He wasn't a very big man. She grabbed his wrist, swung him toward Diehl, hoping the syringe would find another victim, but he was practiced at administering shots to unruly patients. The needle held aloft, Wendt recovered his balance. Fleeting, Tamar wondered if Ted Baldwin had received one of those shots. And Jean Ann, who had known some of the truth . . .

They came at her, and Tamar hurled the next bottle. They ducked, and it flew harmlessly past.

There was a crash, and the room burst into flames. The bottle of flammable solvent had struck the electric heater.

Tamar turned and ran. She grabbed the handles of Jasper Kohl's chair and pushed him ahead of her, through the door, down the wood ramp. After fifty feet, she looked back. The outbuilding was burning. Paul Wendt was sprawled in the yard as Mrs. Diehl slapped his smoldering back. He struggled onto his elbows. "Get her!"

Tamar pushed the chair off the ramp. The ground was frozen, but it was still hard going across twigs and matted leaves. She headed for the road. Her car was only a quarter mile down the blacktop. If she could keep pushing, and running, and if Brunhilde didn't reach her with a syringe—

She hadn't even made the road when a car appeared, moving

slowly as the driver checked mailboxes. The driver saw a madwoman pushing an old man in a wheelchair, the stomping Valkyrie twenty feet behind her, and the flaming building behind both of them.

Cal Hoover leapt out of his unmarked car. "What the hell are you doing?"

"I got your message after lunch," Cal said. They were in Cal's office. "The name Ted Baldwin clicked. A forest ranger found a body this morning in a wrecked car near the Massachusetts border."

"They'd better check him for barbiturates," Tamar said. "Or whatever Wendt had in his syringe for me."

"I don't get it. Who would hire an artist and then kill him over a few pictures?"

"These pictures were worth more than two million, as long as everyone thought they were by Jasper." Hands shaking, she sipped police station coffee. Two hours had passed since he had wrestled Mrs. Diehl to the ground and handcuffed her. Diehl and Wendt were in custody. Before demanding a lawyer, the caregiver had said Edgar Bean had set the fraud in motion by introducing them to Ted Baldwin. Tamar knew she was going to have to find a new gallery.

She was worried about Jasper Kohl, who was at the hospital for observation. His conversation had been lucid at times the other night. If the drugs Wendt had been using were cleared out of his system, to what extent might Jasper recover? She knew the answer might not be the one she wanted. But there was one thing she could straighten out right now.

"Are you going to release Bruce Arnold?" she demanded.

Cal settled back, looking too comfortable. "Why would I do that?"

"Because he's innocent! It's obvious what happened to Jean Ann. She knew about Ted Baldwin doing the paintings. If they killed Baldwin, they had to kill her. Diehl could break anyone's neck."

His head shook. "Bruce Arnold is staying in jail. He tried to poison his wife, but it was taking too long. She phoned him from the pond. He took a half-hour hike through the woods. When he reached the pond, he crushed her neck with a rock and threw her into the water."

"How do you know all that?"

"Jean Ann was having an affair. Arnold couldn't stand it. This afternoon we showed him his wife's cell phone records, and he confessed."

Tamar pushed away the coffee. She glanced at the wall clock. It was early for hospital visiting hours, but if she insisted, they might let her see Jasper. If he asked about his paintings, she didn't know how she would answer. 🐦

### **Solution to the March "Dying Words"**

#### **WORD LIST**

A. Bill Cosby  
B. Routines  
C. Alfalfa  
D. Dick Tracy  
E. Bottle up  
F. Utters  
G. City desk  
H. High-tail

I. Agitates  
J. New York  
K. Alimony  
L. Nehemiah  
M. Ravioli  
N. Umberto Eco  
O. Midshipman  
P. Pool tables  
Q. Oshkosh

R. Laugh off  
S. Emmenthall  
T. Statutes  
U. Roommates  
V. Eyewash  
W. Testament  
X. Upper house  
Y. Remedies  
Z. Nuthatch

#### **QUOTATION**

Author—BRAD BUCHANAN

Work—RUMPOLE'S RETURN (from "Race and Religion in the Postcolonial British Detective Story," edited by Julie H. Kim

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"The . . . popularity of Mortimer's Rumpole books . . . is . . . due . . . to the fact that although Rumpole is a lawyer . . . his cases . . . seem like mysteries that must be solved by technical knowledge . . . or . . . a combination of faith in the . . . legal system and a healthy skepticism about human nature."

# DISHES

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## STRINGFELLOW FORBES

**W**hen you are a child, the watershed times are stronger. You have spent all your few years learning how things are supposed to be and when those certainties, so dearly settled, all change, the adjustment is hard. We don't forget those times, they become markers in the family, events that other things came before or after, always mentioned. Such a time happened to us when I was ten and Luke was eight.

Work had been plentiful where we lived, but then layoffs hit, and my father was suddenly home all the time. He couldn't find anything else that paid enough, and he was not the kind of man who could be without work to do. There was a lot of crying and shouting in our house for a while, and then he heard that they were hiring down South, and before we children knew what was happening, we had moved, and everything was different.

That was back in the fifties, and I can see plainly now that what we moved into, going from up North to down South, was culture shock. We were still in our own country, we thought, and such a term would not have occurred to us, but that is what it was. Life on that street of small houses out on the edge of town was not at all what we were used to, and we had brought with us our own ideas of how people behaved.

It wasn't that we were churchy, just that so much drinking and yelling and public drama alarmed us. In summer, when all the windows were open, the whole street heard when a kid got yelled at or a wife suddenly screeched and ran from a threat. There were outdoor noises that we thought nothing of, like men working on their pickups and playing radios, cutting the grass with loud machines, or the littler kids dancing around in the sprinklers, or in the evenings after the worst of the heat was gone, boys bouncing basketballs *dapp dapp* on the cement aprons to the garages. That was not what upset my mother, that was all normal stuff to us.

Normal to them was the couple who ran after each other with a loaded paintbrush or a frying pan or a saw—sometimes she pursued, sometimes he did. Normal to them was the daughter who

finally came home in the afternoon and was thrown out of the yard by her grandmother; she then turned on the old woman, calling her names and breaking her arm by twisting and her ribs by kicking, and went back in the house, leaving the fat old lady lying on the grass in her apron. My mother called the police about these things. Usually our dad was at work, piling up overtime, leaving Mother to do it. The cruise car would come with revolving lights, and the neighbors would stand on their steps as the cops got out slowly, looking around at all the watchers, hefting their guns up on their hips and strolling over to give a warning or to threaten jail; finally, the two lethal persons who so hated each other would be put back into their house together, or the old woman, sitting up by now and screeching for her son to beat that girl, would collapse so the ambulance men could do their job and take her away. The last thing that happened always on those police evenings was that all the neighbors would turn to eye us before they went back inside to the television. Who were we to call the police?

This went on for the whole first summer, all of us watching each other. There were other kids in the neighborhood, but they never came into our yard, and we took a stiff-necked attitude in defense. The whole place was kind of loose to us, all the yards running together, no fences, and not even a sidewalk, just grassy ditches on both sides for water to run in and little rocking bridges of boards across. The others our age ran everywhere, but we were never included.

September came and Mother was glad to get us off to school. I had to be the big sister and walk Luke both ways. This was the worst time of our childhood, for both of us. We weren't yet very adept at the accent, and we couldn't understand the teachers, that was one thing. And the neighbor children told all the others about us and—well, it was miserable. It hit Luke so hard that he would even ask to play with me, but I was always reading. I wasn't any better off, but I was stubborn and pretended not to care.

Our mother thought that now she would begin to fit in, that she'd join the PTA and help them make cookies and go along on trips to be sure we all behaved. Our mother thought that maybe now she would have some friends.

There were some high school boys three doors down from us. Luke and I were afraid of them, but we never said. We had a Frisbee we liked to skim back and forth in an empty field nearby, but one day a big boy ran in and caught it. He was the one we called Pewie Hughie, a huge heavy kid who played football. He held the bright green disk up high and laughed at Luke jumping to grab it. I had sense enough not to try taking it back, but I didn't



run, I stood there and defied him. I was thinking that I could call the police, if I had to, like Mother did. And then he just stuck his cigarette on it all over, burning holes and watching me. He had made Luke cry; he was satisfied with that. Me, though, he eyed with a backward glance as he left. He would have to work harder on me.

So Dad was never home; Mother was just surviving being a housewife in a strange town, trying new recipes to give her something to do, and Luke and I were turned out into the streets twice a day with a high schooler laying for us. Mother had called the police so many times that all the other mothers laughed at her. We knew that right away from the kids at school. Most of those mothers worked anyway, so there was really no company around for her to visit with, and she began to change.

At first, after the weather cooled down, she had been a demon for housework. She thought those PTA women would maybe meet in our living room. She even unpacked Grandmother's china and put the little thin cups and piles of sharp-edged plates that sat up from one another on the open shelves near the kitchen. We had never used those plates with the green and pink flowers. They were real china from France, she said; we would set the table with them at Thanksgiving and have a nice meal, even if it would just be us four and not the usual crowd of family we had left behind. Meanwhile, we could see those dainty dishes there on the shelf, and they would remind us of where we came from. They reminded me of Grandmother, whose entire little apartment smelled of her Coty perfume and was neat and fresh from one end to the other, a place I loved to be. Order, when you are a child, is reassuring.

After a few weeks, Mother realized that there was practically no PTA at our school. Nobody ever came into our house, and it started to look like a place that wasn't cared for. We didn't even have to pick up our underwear off the floor, though she one time hit Luke because he hadn't made his bed, then she spent the rest of the day crying. It was a while before we understood that she wasn't drinking pure ginger ale out on the screened porch off the kitchen, where she spent most of her time, even when it rained. We became uneasy. Luke got into a fight at school and was sent home. I made up a word and wrote it on the blackboard every day and got sent to the principal because the teachers didn't know what it meant. We had never been in trouble before, and it scared us and thrilled us and cut us loose from ourselves, which scared us worse.

The street was still the same. Kids still got yelled at and some-

times the murderous couple got policed, or Mrs. Green's mother-in-law ran away past our house, complaining about Mrs. Green, with Mr. Green patiently plodding behind her and saying "Come back." But we were actually becoming more like the others.

We had the Thanksgiving dinner on the pretty china, and my father didn't have to go in to the plant, and because there was candlelight we thought it was an okay time, and Mother didn't even cry. Then it was the Christmas season, and Mother went uptown and got herself a job. She'd never had a job, but we were in a money-making time, and she saw her chance.

Supper was always late then, and even if Dad managed to get home for it, he'd have to go back with a sandwich in his hand, slamming the door and wondering why he had let Mother go to work, though I don't think she ever really asked him. We kids didn't care about supper. We ate a lot of cheese and bagels or thought up new combinations for peanut butter. The housekeeping got worse.

One evening Mother came home early and found Pewie Hughie standing in her kitchen. Luke and I hadn't heard him because we were watching the Mouseketeers on TV, and he had just walked right in by the front door behind our backs. He had Dad's guitar under his arm, Grandad-that-died's walking stick in one hand, and a pillowcase—an actual pillowcase off our parents' bed—drooping with some jewelry and watches and a radio in it. Mother began to scream, and he pulled a gun, holding it right in front of his chest and trying to aim it, though it was so heavy it sagged. We came running, of course. You should have seen him grin.

Mother backed away. "You. You put all that stuff down, and you just get out of my house. I'm calling the po-lice." (We'd learned to say it that way since we came down South.)

"Cain't," he said, and the grin got bigger. "I cut the wahr," (*wire in English*).

Hughie felt real big, waving that gun barrel side to side.

Mother had backed up toward the phone, which was on the bookcase where we kept the good china, out where she could see it every day and think that maybe she should get the rest of the house up to the level of that pretty old Haviland. Luke and I were in the doorway behind her.

She moved so fast the crash took us by surprise. Flip! One of those plates hit Hughie in the forehead and bounced off and broke against the edge of the counter behind him. It made a lot of noise. Pewie Hughie had his hands full of our possessions and the gun and couldn't tend to the blood that ran into his eyes. The gun went off and made a hole in the floor, but then he dropped it and

put his hand up to wipe his face and fend off the hail of plates. And Pewie Hughie began to cry like a fat baby.

Mother was throwing plates one after the other, and then Luke and I got into it, skimming those flowered dishes like Frisbees. We put Hughie to beating on the closed back door, but he couldn't manage the latch. Still we threw china, cups now, and the little bowls.

"No, sir!" Mother said. "You just stay right there, and I think pretty soon you're gonna find yourself in jail!"

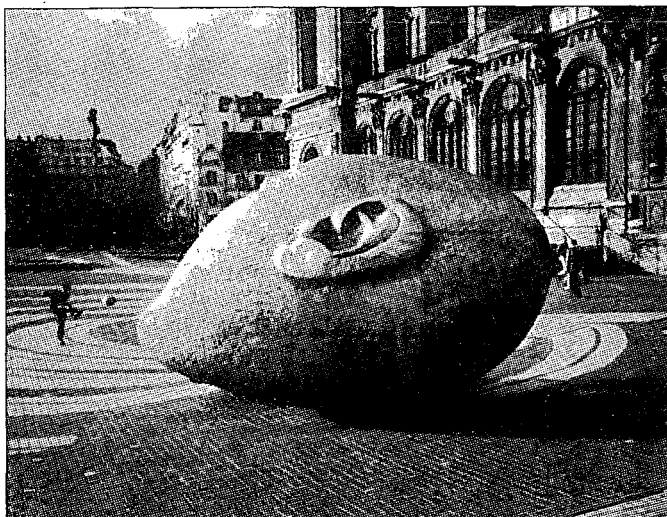
Sure enough, the neighbors were delighted to call the cops on us, hearing such a racket of breaking dishes and gunfire from our kitchen, and sure enough; Pewie Hughie was soon bleeding all over the back seat of a squad car. He had forgotten the gun, and Mother threw it at the car as it pulled away, and that made the police stop and give her a lecture about guns, and then they took Hughie in. (We never told how Hughie cried, but he got put off the football team anyway because of the gun.)

All this cleared the air for our family. Mother and Luke and I got rid of a lot of pent-up emotion, anger we hadn't known was there. Dad came home and found himself wading through a mess of china fragments and laughed so hard he fell into the middle of them and cut his knees and his hands and his behind. Mother came down from the impossible standard of those china dishes (and they, every one, got thrown and broken). She made friends at the store where she worked and didn't need to clean house to go to lunch with them at the drugstore.

We weren't naturally a noisy family, but now we sometimes let rip, if we felt like it. Mr. Green's mother said she'd rather help out at our house than sit and watch that trashy TV all day. She knew a hundred casseroles she could make in our kitchen. Our father got a raise and didn't have to take so much overtime and was home more. And Luke and I finally became part of our grades at school and of the gang of kids we lived among.

Around the street Mother was known after that as Old Breakup. She never let on, but such a nickname had a certain strength to it, and Luke and I took status from it. ♣

# MYSTERIOUS PHOTOGRAPH



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## Getting Ahead of the Game

We will give a prize of \$25 to the person who invents the best mystery story (in 250 words or less, and be sure to include a crime) based on the above photograph. The story will be printed in a future issue. Reply to AHMM, Dell Magazines, 475 Park Avenue South, New York, New York 10016. Please label your entry "April Contest," and be sure your name and address are written on the story you submit. If possible, please also include your Social Security number.

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The winning entry for the October Mysterious Photograph contest will be found on page 141.

# DRAWN FROM DEATH

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LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.

**T**he three police officers exchanged puzzled glances and shifted their feet bewilderedly. A victim of a crime was supposed to make the police welcome, but this victim greeted them as though they themselves were the burglars, returned for a second go.

Max Beerbohm faced them irritably. As the man of the house, his mother had summoned him to deal with this unexpected complication. Max did not like complications. Also, he still wore evening dress, having not long since returned from the theatre. It seemed somehow inappropriate to confront a police sergeant and two constables wearing the tails of formal evening dress, but the unpleasant events of the evening had begun so soon after his return home that he had not had time to change.

He said sarcastically, "In Montagu Square, which is only two squares away, a sensational murder occurred several days ago, and according to the newspapers, there is no solution in sight. A disgusting potpourri of lesser crimes are inflicted on the citizens of London every day, and yet the Metropolitan Police are still able to spare a sergeant and two constables to investigate a burglary that didn't happen. Why three of you?"

Sergeant Ashburn said apologetically, "It's the address, sir."

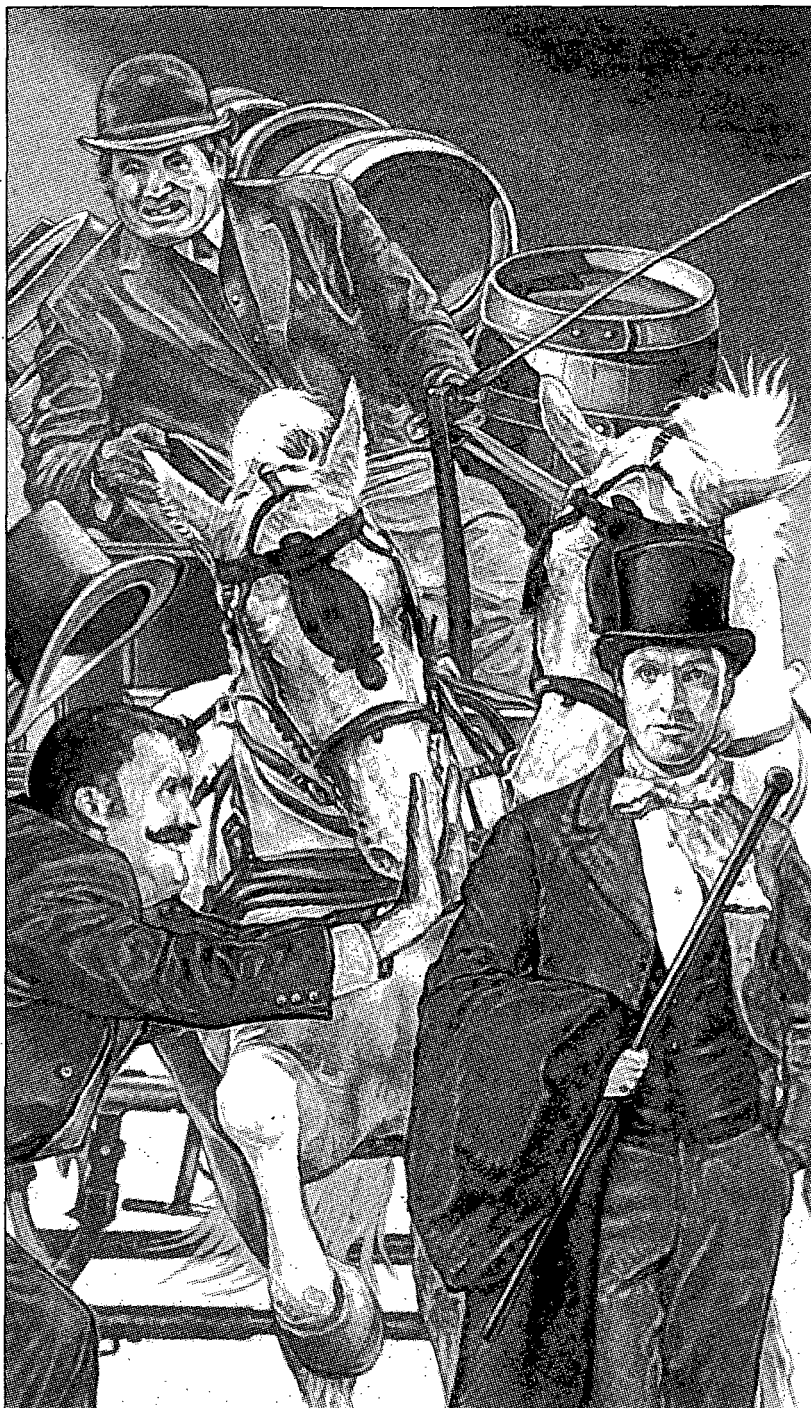
"Surely Upper Berkeley Street is an eminently respectable address!"

"Exactly, sir. We 'ad a report of a burglary here, and at one of these 'ouses that usually means plate, jewellery—a considerable poke. If we gets onto it quick, like, we 'as a chance of recovering what was stolen and also coming down on the thief."

"You keep saying you had a report of a burglary at this address. To the best of my knowledge, there was no burglary and no report. Where did this 'report' come from?"

"One of the maids, sir, screamed to Constable Price, who chanced to be passing by, that you'd 'ad a burglary, and 'e summoned help."





Max turned his gaze from one expectant police countenance to another.

"Two points," he said. "First, address or not, the members of this household belong to a very special class, the impoverished rich. We are regarded with contempt by those who are richer as well as by those who are poorer, but we enjoy certain advantages, one of them being that our homes don't get burgled. A burglar expecting to acquire sudden wealth here is a silly optimist. As for the second—follow me."

He led them up the stairs to his room on the top floor. "I had just returned from the theatre and was telling my sister about the play when I heard a scream. A maid had chanced to look into my room and found it—like this."

He opened a door. The sergeant clucked his tongue sympathetically. "Made a mess, didn't 'e?"

The room was a shambles—furniture overturned, contents of desk drawers scattered across the floor, papers strewn everywhere. The warm breeze of a June evening could be felt through the open window.

The sergeant carefully picked his way through the debris and looked out the window. "Got in this way, did 'e?"

"It would seem so," Max said, "although I confess I can't imagine how he did it."

"Some of them sneaksmen could give a bloomin' fly lessons. But we'll 'ave a look. 'E might have come in by the front door and left the window open as a blind."

"Walking through the house twice without being seen?" Max asked sceptically.

The sergeant nodded. "People see mostly what they expect to see. Your servants don't expect to see a burglar prowling about, so a glimpse of one might not register at all. What did 'e take?"

"Nothing," Max said.

"Do you ordinarily keep valuables here?"

Max shook his head. "I lent my *Mona Lisa* to the Louvre many years ago, and they refuse to return it. You know how Frenchmen are. The British Museum is almost as bad. It has my First, Second, and Third Shakespeare Folios. There is nothing here except my own scribbles and sketches, and their value—I can tell you, sadly—would not interest any self-respecting burglar. As far as I've been able to determine, he took nothing."

"'E must have thought there was something valuable here," the sergeant persisted. "'E went to considerable trouble to find it."

Max shook his head again. "I'm telling you—I am newly employed as a dramatic critic for *The Saturday Review*. My remuneration is

neration is five pounds a week. At that rate it will take me a lifetime or two to accumulate enough to interest burglars. All of this makes no sense whatsoever."

"Maybe something you own has a value you don't know about," the sergeant said thoughtfully.

"Unless the burglar confused one of my drawings with something of Rembrandt's, not even the most desperate thief could find anything here worth stealing." He patted the man's sturdy shoulder. "Here's a bit of sound advice for you. Concentrate on catching the murderer and don't trouble yourself over some madman's irrational foray into my room. There will be less fuss for everyone that way, especially for me. I definitely do not care for fuss."

"We'll get the murderer," the sergeant promised. "'E can't get away. The young lady marked 'im, you see. Put up quite a fight, she did, while 'e was strangling 'er. Raked 'is hands good. There was blood and strips of flesh under 'er fingernails. We'll get 'im, all right. But about your burglary . . ." He glanced around and shook his head. "No one seeing this room could doubt someone wanted something and wanted it badly. As you clean up this mess, keep your eyes open. I suspect there is, after all, something missing. Try to find out what it is. Do you have any property elsewhere?"

"Only some drawings. I lend them, I sell them when I can, I send them to publishers to be considered for publication, I leave them with dealers for exhibit and sale. Usually I have a few on hand, but at this moment there are only some scribbled notes for my *Saturday Review* articles. No state secrets, no lurid confessions of the socially prominent, nothing."

The sergeant looked around again. "Maybe 'e found what he was looking for. 'E looked hard enough. If 'e didn't find it, 'e'll look elsewhere. Take it from me—a man who'd tear a room apart like this is desperate to find something."

Max usually breakfasted with his mother, Mrs. Eliza Beerbohm, and his sister, Constance. When he joined them the next morning, some order had been restored to his room but none at all to his wounded feelings. A burglary, he reflected, makes a person feel violated. His mother had reacted to the mess in his room by murmuring something about properly punishing the person responsible, but Max hushed her. "Proper punishment" suggested a tedious series of court appearances, not to mention notoriety of a kind that benefited no one except the newspapers, and he wanted none of it.

Constance was reading a lurid report in one of those papers

about the latest developments in the Montagu Square murder. Popular rumour made the young woman, Miss Letty Tapping, the mistress or former mistress of several prominent men. Scandals within scandals were hinted; the police, it seemed, were eager to converse with Lord George Pallister, Duke of Arlington; with Sir Gordon Wade, M.P.; with Viscount Jeffrey Sandell, eldest son of the Earl of Dunston; with Jamison Weyman, a wealthy baronet; and with Colonel Thornton Poggs, D.S.O., alleged to have distinguished himself in many obscure battles about the Empire. Oddly enough, none of these men seemed to be available for questioning.

"Do you know any of them, Max?" Constance asked.

Max, who had been paying no attention, was jolted back to reality. The violence done to his room had been a major disruption in his life, and he disliked disruptions. He was not interested in murders.

"Know them? Why would I know them?"

"I mean—have you drawn any of them?"

"Probably," Max said lightly. "A man with the character to become a suspect in a murder case ought to have an interesting face. I'm sorry, I wasn't listening. Who were they?"

Constance read the names again.

"Yes, I've drawn all of them," Max said. "Colonel Poggs is the only one who is totally uninteresting. I drew him for that reason—to see whether his face could somehow be made interesting. It couldn't. Lord George Pallister is 'The Beard,' of course, beard and moustache. Any portrait of him would show a mass of hair with a rim of face around it and an unusually sharp nose protruding—an amazing achievement for a relatively young man. He is the anti-social peer, rarely seen anywhere, always taking himself off to remote places, where apparently he lives a hermit's life, so it figures that he wouldn't be available for questioning or anything else. Sir Gordon is distinguished for his luxurious side-whiskers and his small nose. The viscount looks like an errant schoolboy. Jamison Weyman, who is a man with a very great wealth and a very small title, tries unsuccessfully to look as though the two are in balance. His large nose and meagre moustache are against him."

"How interesting that you should know all of them!" Constance exclaimed.

Max shrugged modestly. He made it a point to be familiar with the face of anyone who was a suitable subject for his pencil, and that included the nobility, politicians, public figures of every kind, anyone at all of note. He collected faces—in his mind—from newspaper pictures, art galleries, all kinds of public occasions, private occasions like parties, at theatres, in lawcourts, or in the gal-



leries of the House of Commons. Some of his collected faces he met accidentally in the street.

He stored his impressions, for he never drew directly from life. He waited until his memory had coalesced them into his own unique satiric view of the subject. Two years previously, in 1896, a collection of his drawings had been published, *Caricatures of Twenty-Five Gentlemen*. Many had appeared singly in other publications. Max was an anomaly—not quite famous, not yet, but becoming known as a writer as well as an artist.

But surely he had not yet reached that level of distinction where anyone would have considered it worthwhile to steal from him. The ransacking of his room was a major disturbance in his life—not so much because of the mess it left but because it made no sense.

He quickly swallowed the remainder of his breakfast and hurried away, murmuring something about errands. He was still brooding, and he felt an urge to complain to something, though he couldn't have said exactly what he meant to complain about. Fate, perhaps. Fate had always been kind to him in the past. Could it be that he had somehow displeased her?

He was impeccably dressed, as always. Max was a dandy and took pride in it. He was not merely correctly but artistically dressed at all times. He looked after his own wardrobe, pressing his clothes and ironing his silk hats. Fortunately, the violator of his room had left his wardrobe untouched, and Max would never have allowed a trifling domestic catastrophe like having his room torn apart prevent his making morning calls properly attired with hat, cane, and gloves. His first stop was the Mannerly Galleries, the Oxford Street shop of James Mannerly, an art dealer specialising in prints, etchings, and drawings, and there he abruptly walked into a scene uncomfortably reminiscent of the one he had experienced in his home the night before.

Chaos had struck randomly about the shop, and several police officers were contemplating the scene with solemn puzzlement.

Mannerly came hurrying to meet him. "Max!" he exclaimed. "I am devastated. I meant to send you a message, but the police insisted that everything be checked to see what is missing, and what with one thing and another—how did you find out about it?"

He was a large, untidy, unpleasant-looking man, and his enemies claimed his success was due to the fact that any work of art looked better in his presence.

"What happened?" Max asked.

"Someone broke in last night and made this ghastly mess, but

the only things they seem to have stolen are your drawings."

Max carefully righted an overturned chair and sat down in it. "My drawings?"

Mannerly nodded.

"I suppose I should be flattered that somewhere in London there is one Beerbohm collector," Max mused. "One active Beerbohm collector, I suppose I should say. These weren't very good drawings. As you know, they were only a few leftover odds and ends that I gave you to fill out your display. I would have been surprised if any of them sold. Why would anyone bother to steal them?"

Mannerly raised his hands perplexedly. "Art thieves are unpredictable. Some are knowledgeable enough to take only the one or two most valuable things in a collection. They scorn touching anything else. Others take whatever they can and hope it will turn out to be valuable."

"Who is the police officer in charge?" Max asked.

"Sergeant Hoskin. He's in back checking for jemmy marks or whatever it is police do. Just a moment."

Mannerly moved with a quickness surprising for his bulk. He returned with a dour, lank police officer who obviously took a grim view of life and everything connected with it. Mannerly performed the introductions. "Max Beerbohm—he's the artist whose drawings were stolen."

Sergeant Hoskin eyed Max narrowly. "What would you say your drawings were worth?"

"If I had received five pounds for each one, I would have felt blessed by whatever fairy it is who watches over financiers, but I don't think James was asking five pounds."

"Three," Mannerly said. "As you said, they weren't very good drawings."

Hoskin scowled. "Twelve drawings stolen, you would have been glad to sell them for three pounds each, total loss about thirty-five pounds and probably less, not much of a burglary. An unusual amount of damage done, though. If all he wanted was those drawings, why didn't he just take them and leave?"

"Unfortunately, the mystery goes far deeper than that," Max said. "Last night, while I was at the theatre, my room in my mother's home on Upper Berkeley Street was burgled."

The sergeant procured a chair for himself. A boring case had suddenly become interesting. "What was taken?"

"As far as I've been able to tell, nothing. But whoever did it left a far worse mess there."

"Perhaps he went to your quarters looking for drawings before he came here. Did you have any drawings there?"



"None. I gave everything I had on hand to James to fill out his display."

"Who was in charge of the police investigation?"

"A Sergeant Ashburn."

"I know him," Sergeant Hoskin said.

"He thought I might possess something of value without knowing it. Are you positive, James, that one of my drawings wasn't a masterpiece in disguise?"

Mannerly shook his head emphatically. "There is no way we can make the estimated value more than thirty-five pounds."

"Just a moment," Sergeant Hoskin said. "You're an artist—"

"And a writer. And a dramatic critic," Max added.

"And you've done other drawings?"

"Many."

"Are any of them worth more than the three-pound value you put on these?"

"I certainly hope so!"

"In that case, the burglar, hearing that some of your work was on display here, may have been hoping to steal one of those better drawings. Where are they?"

Max stared at him. He had the feeling of having been suddenly tumbled into an utterly strange landscape, like that of Alice in Wonderland. He and his sisters had often speculated on what life in such a place would be like. Now he knew. All rules of logic had been suspended. Why steal a drawing by Max Beerbohm? He could, very quickly, produce another. In fact, he could reproduce a copy of every stolen drawing from memory and do it far quicker than the time the originals had taken.

"Ackroyd Galleries on Old Bond Street," Max said. "Special exhibit, 'Twelve Drawings by Max Beerbohm.'"

Sergeant Hoskins turned to a constable. "Get over to the Ackroyd Galleries and find out whether anything unusual has happened there."

"Ackroyd Galleries?" the constable repeated, his face screwed up in puzzlement.

"On Old Bond Street," Max said again. "Near the Royal Arcade."

The constable's expression brightened, and he hurried away.

Max's newly discovered illogical world continued to spin around him until the constable returned. Then it fractured into very small pieces.

"They had a burglary at the Ackroyd Galleries last night," the constable announced. "The place is a mess, just like here, but nothing was stolen but this gentleman's twelve drawings."



Max attended the Haymarket Theatre that night with a friend, the artist Wilson Steer. Steer had a mind that was most singularly focused on art. When he talked about a play, his comments were principally directed at the scenery. That night the scenery had been abominable, and when they left the theatre, Steer enlarged upon this as they walked along.

Max listened silently: His thoughts were still in a turmoil over the burglaries. Further, this was Wednesday night. The following day, Thursday, was his day of agony, the day when his *Saturday Review* article had to be written. He had taken Steer to the theatre with him in the hope that the artist might contribute an insight he could base his article on, but *Saturday Review* readers were unlikely to appreciate dramatic criticism that treated a play as an art exhibit.

Before the play began, Steer had tried to talk Max out of the funk he was in by applying logic. "Max, be reasonable. You're twenty-five years old. You stand at the beginning of a career everyone expects will be brilliant, but you are better known as a writer than as an artist, and your art, that of a caricaturist, is highly specialised and one-dimensional—especially so with you, since you work with a pencil. No mad collector is going around London stealing your work. No collector could possibly be that demented. No one has a vendetta against you. You're one of the most popular men in London. Hostesses love you. Whenever they need an extra male to match with a visiting spinster cousin, you are always available, and you arrive impeccably dressed and exude charm all evening no matter how plain the cousin is. You are a gem. Forget this business of stolen drawings—you can do all of them over again in an hour or two, can't you? Call all of it a stupid mistake and get on with your life."

By the time they left the theatre, Steer had already forgotten the stolen drawings. They walked along together, Steer—tall and sturdy with a bristling moustache—towering over the slender, diminutive Max and expounding truisms of colour and form at him, none of which, it seemed, Steer had detected in the scenery of the play they had just seen. Max only half listened. The article he must write on the morrow already loomed heavily over him—he had no idea what he was going to write about—and the puzzle of his stolen drawings hung over him just as oppressively.

As they reached Shaftsbury Avenue, chaos erupted. There were shouts, the screech of heavy wheels turning suddenly, the neighing of horses. Max felt himself jerked bodily into the air. Something struck his head, and he was momentarily dazed. Behind him came a continued shouting, crashes and thuds, and

the utterly unreal reek of beer splashed about in quantities.

Steer said calmly, "Don't you ever look about you? Lucky for you you weren't walking with Will Rothenstein. He's much too small to perform a rescue like that."

Max's head ached. His top hat was in his hand, though he had no recollection of picking it up or having it handed to him. It had been crushed, ruined.

"What happened?" he asked Steer.

"Stupid driver of a brewer's dray must have been half asleep when something frightened his horses. They came right at us. Fortunately, one of us was looking about. I plucked you from under the horses' hooves." He laughed and slapped Max on the back. "So you'll live to write that article tomorrow after all. What are you going to write about? The drama of being run down by a brewer's dray?"

"*Saturday Review* readers wouldn't find that any more interesting than the other topics I've been able to think of," Max said sadly. "The problem is, I have no idea what would interest them."

"Then write about something that interests you," Steer said.

He hailed a four-wheeler, and he boosted Max into it and announced his intention of seeing him safely to his door. "You shouldn't be allowed out after dark," he said.

At the Beerbohm residence, Constance took one look at Max's disarrayed appearance and wailed, "How terrible! And on Wednesday night too! How will you get your article written?"

Mrs. Beerbohm arrived a moment later and added her own wail. "Poor Max! And tomorrow's Thursday. How will you manage?"

"By forgetting all this," Max said, "and getting a good night's sleep." He thanked Steer for saving his life and assorted smaller favours and hurried off to bed, where he was quite unable to sleep at all.

The article got written. An elderly actress had charmingly played the part of a young girl in the play he had seen with Steer, and Max began with a glowing tribute to her performance and enlarged on this to discuss the fantasy inherent in any theatrical presentation. It was late when he finished. He delivered his copy himself and went home to tumble into bed. That night, Thursday, he slept soundly. He had escaped his bondage for another week.

At the breakfast table on Friday morning, his mind had returned to the stolen drawings. Constance was reading aloud the latest news on the Montagu Square murder. Mrs. Beerbohm was listening absently while mentally organising her next dinner party. She planned a dinner party as lavishly as the Lord Mayor planned a

formal procession, with the result that the Beerbohm exchequer, limited as it was, remained perpetually in strained circumstances.

Max also listened absently. He did not stir himself until Constance finished the article. "You didn't mention any of those illustrious suspects you were talking about the other day," he observed.

"This is the *Times*," Constance said. "It doesn't mention suspects unless they really are suspects. That was the *Morning Observer* I was reading the other day. It must bribe someone in Scotland Yard to give it the latest gossip. All of those men had been linked with Miss Tapping at one time or another, so of course the police wanted to check on their whereabouts when she was murdered. But the police are no longer interested in them."

"Does that mean all five convinced the police that they had alibis?"

"They didn't exactly convince the police because some of them haven't been found yet. The Duke of Arlington is fishing in Scotland and has been since the first of the month; he has a private fishing camp there. Sir Gordon Wade is sailing with friends in the Irish Sea. Viscount Sandell is staying with friends in Cornwall. Jamison Weyman was in Manchester on business at the time of the murder and is still there. None of them could conveniently come forward when asked to, you see. Colonel Poggs returned from the Continent the day after the murder, and he easily satisfied the police that he had been in Berlin when it happened. So all of them are eliminated."

"'Private fishing camp' is the word for it where Lord George Pallister is concerned," Max observed. "He thinks the human race was a mistake, and he has as little to do with it as possible. The Viscount Sandell has no home of his own and is always outstaying his welcome with someone. He will never be at a loss for an alibi. Whatever happens, he will have been someone's guest at the time. Jamison Weyman is always travelling on business when he is wanted. Sir Gordon Wade is a sailing fanatic. It is even rumoured that he sails boats in his bathtub—at his age. As for Colonel Poggs, he was never where he was needed in battle, or so it is said, so it shouldn't surprise the police that he wasn't available when they wanted him. What a motley group of suspects! If I were a police officer, I would arrest the lot."

"But they aren't suspects any longer! The police know where they were at the time of the murder and have been able to eliminate all of them."

"I see," Max said. He suddenly saw something very clearly, something that had happened the day of the Montagu Square murder: Max had strolled over to Manchester Square to visit the Wallace

Collection and was on his way home. He was meditating on a considerable problem as he walked along. He wasn't satisfied with one of the drawings in the group he planned to place for exhibit at the Ackroyd Galleries. He wanted to replace it with something better, but he had nothing to offer.

In Gloucester Place, he all but collided with a man who was skulking along in a furtive sort of way. The skulking figure's clean-shaven face was unfamiliar to Max, but it seemed oddly reminiscent of someone, and this jolted his mind to furious activity. There also had been something odd about the figure's hands, but that didn't fully register until later. He made no sketch, since he always drew from memory, but he clearly perceived the drawings he would make and the caption it would carry. He hurried home, drew it, delivered the twelve drawings to the Ackroyd Galleries for the planned exhibit, and destroyed the drawing he disliked.

He hadn't given the skulking figure another thought, but now, looking back on the experience, Max was able to see it—and a number of other things—in an entirely different perspective. One of those things was his adventure with the brewer's dray. He sent a telegram to Wilson Steer. "Come at once. I need you." Then he retired to his room and redrew all twelve of the stolen Ackroyd drawings.

By the time he finished, Steer had arrived, panting perplexities. He had expected to find Max on his deathbed, and he considered it just like the impractical Max to send for an artist instead of a doctor when he found himself dying.

Max explained himself, and Steer's large frame inflated further with indignation. "Do you mean to say that idiot dray driver tried to run us down on purpose?"

"That is exactly what I mean to say—except that the target was me, not you. Not that the person who engaged the driver would have shed any tears because you accidentally got in the way."

"Now I understand," Steer said. "You need a bodyguard."

"Just until tomorrow night," Max said, "but I must appear to be carrying on as though I don't suspect anything. That's why I sent for you. You can be my guard without arousing anyone's suspicions because we are often seen together."

"Where do you want to go?"

"First, to the Ackroyd Galleries."

"Along the way, we will stop at my studio," Steer said. "I keep a revolver there. If some idiot dray driver tries to run us down again, I'll shoot him."

At the Ackroyd Galleries, Max conferred with Edward Unwin, the galleries' director. Unwin, distinguishedly bearded, looked like

an artist himself—and was. He was fond of Max, but it seemed to him that Max was asking a great deal this time. “All those advertisements will cost money,” he protested.

“I’ll try to get Scotland Yard to pay for them,” Max promised.

“If I had to depend on that, I would starve,” Unwin grumbled.

“The advertisements are to appear in as many of tomorrow’s newspapers as possible,” Max persisted, “and you are to display this drawing in your window all day tomorrow.”

In the end, Unwin agreed to what Max asked.

“Where next?” Steer asked.

“Scotland Yard.”

“No, you don’t. Someone may be following us, and if he saw you go to Scotland Yard, it would give the show away.”

Steer hailed a four-wheeler and told the driver to drive to Winsor & Newton in Rathbone Place. They were the colourmen from whom he bought his paints. Once inside, a whispered word of explanation gained them exit into a mews, where their four-wheeler was waiting. Steer repeated this manoeuvre twice more, at a bookseller’s and at an engraver’s. Finally, after studying the traffic behind them with care, he considered it safe to make for Scotland Yard.

But he had one belated practical question. “Once we get there, how are you going to get in? One doesn’t just walk in off the street, announce that one has important information for the commissioner, and immediately receive honoured guest status.”

“I didn’t think about that,” Max said, “but getting into Scotland Yard can’t be much different from gaining admission anywhere. You have to know someone. Let me think.”

Max probably knew less about the police than anyone else in London, but he instinctively realised that talking with the constable whose beat included Upper Berkeley Street would not accomplish what he wanted. Hence his mission to Scotland Yard, but he hadn’t given any thought to whom he wanted to see there. Now he knew. He wanted to start at the top.

He gave the cab driver new directions and called on a businessman, an old friend of his father’s. That gentleman did not know the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, but he did know someone who did. That was their next stop. As a result, Max and Steer arrived at New Scotland Yard armed with a letter of introduction.

It almost did not help them. Young men lavishly got up in full morning dress, which Max was, were such an oddity at police headquarters that Max stood out like a South American parrot in a flock of sparrows. The officers’ inclination was to lock him up at once and then question him, but Max persisted and got his letter delivered.



The letter said—after the conventional pleasantries—“These two gentlemen are Mr. Max Beerbohm, who is distinguished in London’s art, literary, and dramatic circles, and his friend Wilson Steer, an artist. Mr. Beerbohm can tell you who the Montagu Square murderer is. He also can tell you how to catch him. Sincerely . . .”

As Max expected, this brought him a prompt interview. The commissioner, Sir Edward Bradford, had a formidable reputation—his history included the amputation without chloroform of an arm mangled by a tigress in India—but in appearance he was mild enough and his manner was friendly.

“I heard about your stolen drawings,” he said. “I have a secretary who collects police oddities, and he pounced on that one. Are the stolen drawings somehow connected with the murder?”

“They are,” Max said. “The thief not only attempted to eliminate the drawings; he also attempted to eliminate the artist.” He described his adventure with the brewer’s dray. “This is why I have Wilson with me. He is acting as my bodyguard until this is resolved.”

“And how did you manage to identify the murderer?” Sir Edward asked.

Max told the full story of the skulking figure and what had followed. Sir Edward listened attentively. When Max finished, he asked, “Do you think he will attempt to steal your new drawings?”

“He will. He also will make another attempt on the life of the artist. He has no choice.”

Sir Edward nodded slowly. “Agreed. He has no choice. Either way we will have a legal mess on our hands, but that isn’t your doing. Very well. We will set the trap. Mr. Steer looks very capable, but we don’t know what he may have to deal with. Do you want a police guard?”

Max shook his head. “That would be too conspicuous. I’ll keep Wilson with me and try to behave as normally as possible. It will be an interesting experience. I’ve never lived dangerously before.”

“And tomorrow night? If you want to be present to see the trap sprung, you will have to dress differently.”

“Of course I’ll dress differently. I wouldn’t dream of going out in the evening in morning clothes,” Max said.

Saturday afternoon Steer escorted Max on another roundabout through several shops whose owners he knew and finally smuggled him through the rear door of the Ackroyd Galleries. The police were already there in force, having arrived singly pretending to be customers. The manager’s office was crowded.

Edward Unwin regarded the growing gathering with a scowl. "I hope there will be less damage this time," he said.

"We won't give him time to damage anything," a police inspector promised.

Ackroyd Galleries was comprised of several rooms arranged in labyrinth fashion, and visitors often got confused and found themselves contemplating drawings or paintings a second time. This was deliberate. "An artwork always looks better on its second viewing," Unwin said. "Familiarity is the most important element in the layman's appreciation of art." The layout of the galleries guaranteed that a thief looking for a single group of drawings would find the task far more difficult than anticipated, but the police had no intention of allowing the thief time for a leisurely search.

Closing time came; the galleries emptied of visitors and customers. Max, resplendent in evening dress, placed a chair in a dark corner and arranged himself so as to do as little damage as possible to the crease in his trousers.

"A fine thief-catcher you would make," Steer announced.

"I am not here to catch a thief," Max said. "I have a grievance against him, so I am here to see him captured, but I will be perfectly content to watch. Some men are destined to keep the wheels of life turning; others have a powerful inclination to watch them do it. I am a watcher."

"I am not," Steer said. "If I get my hands on this thief, I will keep him turning, all right—inside out."

Two hours later, Max announced in a whisper, "I never knew time could pass so slowly."

"That's always the case when one has nothing to do but wait," Steer returned.

When the long wait finally came to an end shortly after one o'clock, everyone was taken by surprise, especially the police. For one thing, the lock on the rear door was picked so quickly and expertly that the thief was inside in what seemed like an instant. For another thing, there were three of them. One headed directly for the front of the store; the others moved towards the exhibit of Beerbohm drawings with a sureness that could only have come from careful advance inspection of the premises.

The thief in the front of the store was reaching for the drawing on display in the window when the police closed their trap. All three of the thieves fought like demented wildcats, and there simply were not enough police on hand to fulfill the inspector's pledge of no damage to the premises. Wilson Steer delightedly waded into the fray and exacted a measure of revenge for the errant dray driver.

Finally, the thieves were immobilised, lights were called for, and the cloths that covered their faces ripped off. Max indicated one of them with a chortle—the sharp nose and furtive look were familiar.

"May I present—Lord George Pallister, Duke of Arlington, and two of his low friends."

A police constable scrutinised His Lordship perplexedly. "Blimey! What's become of 'is 'air? Did 'e shave it off?"

"If he ever had it," Max said. "I always thought he displayed far too much beard and moustache for such a young man. Find his residence, and you may find a choice assortment of false whiskers. But hair isn't the evidence you need. Take his gloves off."

The police did so—with another struggle—revealing a pair of hands deeply and repeatedly scratched.

"If he's not the Montagu Square murderer, he'd better have a good explanation for this," the inspector said. "All right, all right," he added, as his captive began to babble hysterically. "You can tell us all about it at headquarters. Bring Mr. Beerbohm's drawings—they're evidence."

"The caricature of Lord George Pallister is the one in the window," Max said. "That should be all you'll need. Let the galleries continue to exhibit the others. The publicity will provide Unwin with some small compensation for being invaded and wrecked twice."

Sir Edward Bradford called on Max the following Tuesday. Max entertained him in his mother's drawing room since he had none of his own.

"His Lordship still isn't talking," Sir Edward said. "Probably he never will. Since he's a peer of the realm, he can't be tried in an ordinary assizes, but that's none of our concern. Wherever he's tried, a case against him must be presented, and that's what we're preparing. We've accumulated a mass of evidence already. His Lordship was leading a double life. He pretended to go off by himself to the wilds of Scotland or Wales, and instead he assumed a second identity in London, where he consorted with his mistress, Letty Tapping, and was well known in London's underworld. As we understand the case, he had a falling out with his mistress, attempted a reconciliation, and lost his temper and strangled her—getting his hands thoroughly and viciously scratched in the process."

"After the murder, he was in a desperate hurry to put as much distance between himself and Montagu Square as possible before he risked hailing a cab. When he rushed past you in Gloucester Place, he must have recognised you."

"I'm sure he did," Max said. "He doesn't often appear in public, but I can remember being present at two dinners he condescended to attend, and I've encountered him once or twice at public gatherings. As for why he would remember an unimportant writer and artist—I've heard it said that I dress conspicuously."

"I wonder where anyone would get that idea," Sir Edward murmured.

"Once seen, always remembered—that's a dandy's fate."

"In any event, he did recognise you, and when he saw a caricature of himself listed among the drawings Ackroyd was exhibiting, he went to see it. The bandaged hands told him you had recognised him. You had seen him in London near the scene of the murder shortly after it occurred, which meant that as long as you were around to give evidence, his carefully contrived Scottish alibi was worthless." He paused and scrutinised Max. "I still consider it remarkable that you recognised him without his beard."

"I've trained myself to imagine what faces would be like with different features or with the features exaggerated. Even so, it was a belated recognition. I didn't realise that I'd seen him until several days later. At the time, my mind was searching for a subject for a drawing to replace one I didn't like in the group I had put together for the Ackroyd exhibit. To me he was a stranger with something about him that weirdly reminded me of Lord George Pallister—which was just the inspiration I was searching for.

"I went home and drew a new caricature of Lord George Pallister, but due to some odd twist of memory, I drew him like the stranger I had just seen—a Lord George skulking along in a great hurry as though fearing to be seen. I gave the caricature the caption, 'Lord George Pallister skulks from the House of Lords after calling the Earl of Walmly a tarradiddler.' You may remember that several weeks ago he denounced the earl in such strong language that he was officially reprimanded for it. But by another odd twist of memory, I made both of his hands crudely bandaged, just as the stranger's hands were bandaged. Perhaps I sensed some symbolism in this that I was only half aware of. So the caricature was really a drawing of the stranger with the Duke's beard added."

Sir Edward nodded. "When he saw the drawing, he knew it was evidence that could get him hanged for murder. That set in motion everything that followed. He didn't do all of it himself, of course. We have confessions from the two low friends who were captured with him. One of them turned your room inside out, and the other, an expert locksmith turned thief, accompanied the duke to the two exhibits to steal your drawings. The duke was trying to divert attention from the theft of the caricature of himself by

handing us a much larger mystery. Then it occurred to him that you probably could redraw the caricature of him from memory, and he hired a dray driver to trail after you when you left the theatre and contrive to have an accident. No doubt he planned other accidents when that failed, but before he could carry any of them out, he learned from the newspaper advertisements that you did redraw the caricature, and he found it on display in Ackroyd's window. As you anticipated, he arranged to steal it at the earliest opportunity. We have the complete case now—with you as our star witness."

Max cringed.

"He'll have to be judged by a court of his peers," Sir Edward went on, "which will give the nobility something to do and the newspapers ample scandal to draw moral lessons from for weeks to come."

"The newspapers will miss the real moral lesson," Max said. "One should never make an afternoon call unless properly attired, and that includes both hat and gloves. If the duke had worn gloves when he called on Letty Tapping, he could have concealed the damage to his hands inconspicuously, I wouldn't have drawn him with bandaged hands, and he might have escaped the law altogether. When a nobleman dresses with such poor taste, we shouldn't be surprised that he is also capable of murder." 🦋



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# REEL CRIME

STEVE HOCKENSMITH

**P**eter Webber once wrote an autobiographical essay in which he admitted that he lives in the grip of a compulsion—"a sickness," he called it. It first came over him when he was fifteen years old, and it's lost none of its irresistible power decades later.

Fortunately, Webber's "sickness" is actually pretty benign: He became obsessed with being a filmmaker after stumbling into an art-house movie theater in London as a youth. As fixations go, he could've done a lot worse. Dreaming of being a director might be a bit masochistic, given how difficult it is to get a film made, but it's not going to land you in an asylum with a leather muzzle strapped to your face.

Eating people, on the other hand—now that'll get you in trouble.

And make you famous. Just ask the hero/villain of Webber's new movie, the *Silence of the Lambs* prequel *Hannibal Rising*.



Gaspard Ulliel (left) and *Hannibal Rising* director Peter Webber. Photo by Keith Hampshire, courtesy of The Weinstein Company

Given that the film charts the early years of the sickest puppy in the cinema kennel—Hannibal "The Cannibal"—it's entirely appropriate that the director should think of himself as barking mad.

Certainly, some of Webber's peers must think he's nuts. After all, who'd want to fol-

low in the formidable footsteps of directors Michael Mann (who brought Lecter to life onscreen first in 1986's *Manhunter*), Jonathan Demme (who won an Oscar for *The Silence of the Lambs*), and Ridley Scott (whose resumé includes *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, and *Gladiator*, as well as the 2001 *Lambs* sequel *Hannibal*)?

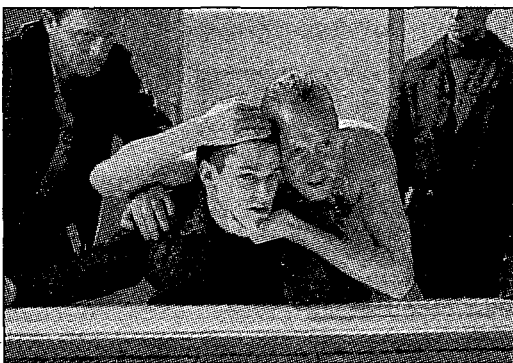


(No, I'm not forgetting about Brett Ratner, who directed the 2002 *Manhunter* retread *Red Dragon*. It's just that no one worries about being compared to him unfavorably.)

"Any film is intimidating before you start work on it, large or small," Webber says, shrugging off questions about Hannibal Lecter's popular screening outings in years past. "It's a step into the unknown."

Well, not totally unknown, at least in terms of the story. Bits and pieces of Lecter's history have been parceled out in previous books and movies. But with *Hannibal Rising*, the backstory steps into the spotlight.

The film takes place in the 1940s and '50s, when Lecter was still a young man. After seeing his family nearly wiped out in World War II, the traumatized boy ends up in a hellish Iron Curtain orphanage. He eventually escapes and makes his way to Paris, where he's taken in by his glamorous aunt (by marriage; apparently—named "Lady Murasaki," she's played by Chinese star Li Gong).



*Reds menace young Hannibal Lecter in post-war Europe. Photo by Keith Hampshire, courtesy of The Weinstein Company*

Under his aunt's tutelage, young Lecter reveals himself to have a brilliant medical mind, and soon he's the youngest med student since Doogie Howser. He also lands an internship at the local morgue and helps a determined police inspector (*The Wire*'s Dominic West) on the trail of a passel of war criminals. After a brutal attack on Lady Murasaki, Lecter seeks revenge, discovering in the process that he has other latent talents—ones involving sharp objects and the cooking of decidedly non-kosher cuisine. By the end of the film, the bad guys are (literally) dead meat . . . and the baddest guy of them all has left for a new start in America.

The film itself represents another new start for Lecter: For the first time since 1986, the character won't be played by Anthony Hopkins. (Brian Cox made for a very different—though almost as creepy—Hannibal the Cannibal in *Manhunter*.) Makeup tricks and CGI can create some amazing illusions, but even the most skilled FX maestro would have a tough time turning Sir Tony into a convincing teenager. So when Webber took

over the project way back in 2005, the hunt was immediately on for a new Cannibal.

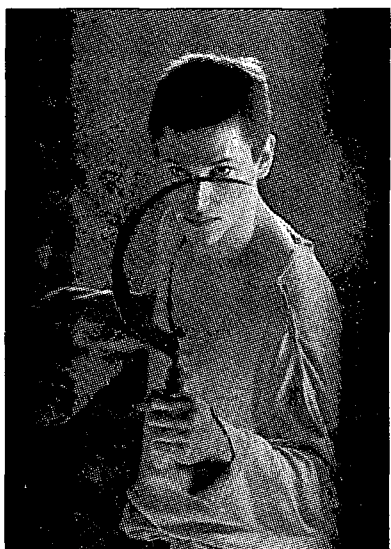
And the hunt went on.

And on.

And on.

"I have lost count of the number of actors we auditioned," Webber says.

Eventually, however, Webber's persistence (or was it obsessive-ness?) paid off . . . or so he hopes. Twenty-two-year-old Frenchman Gaspard Ulliel (best known stateside for costarring in the critical fave *A Very Long Engagement*) was cast as the young



Gaspard Ulliel tries to get a handle on an infamous character. Photo by Keith Hampshire, courtesy of The Weinstein Company

Lecter. Although Ulliel doesn't look much like Hopkins, young or old, Webber remains confident he found the right actor for the part.

"[Ulliel's got] looks, talent, attitude, ability," Webber says. "When you see the movie, you will know why [he won the role]."

Maybe. Maybe not. Hopkins's portrayal of the suave serial killer will cast a long shadow. And despite Internet rumors that he'd recorded voiceover narration for the film, Hopkins had no involvement with the project whatsoever.

Yet while Lecter's old familiar face (and voice) are gone, the same evil mind lurks behind the scenes: The screenplay for

*Hannibal Rising* was adapted from Thomas Harris's recent novel of the same name . . . by Harris himself.

Though every one of his five novels has been brought to the screen (starting with *Black Sunday* in 1977), Harris himself has always distanced himself from Hollywood. In fact, the reclusive writer distances himself from just about everything. Although he started his career as a journalist, he refuses to be interviewed by them now, and little is known about him except that he has homes in Miami and Sag Harbor, New York, and that he's filthy rich.

Webber sidesteps questions about Harris, though the two presumably worked together closely to polish the script—Harris's

first produced screenplay. Webber acknowledges that the writer wasn't on hand for any of the film's shooting because "Prague is a long way from Miami." (*Hannibal Rising* was filmed in the Czech Republic.) But beyond that, he's staying mum.

"Thomas is a famous recluse, a mystery wrapped in an enigma by a puzzle, and I really don't want to say anything about working with him," Webber says. "He might set one of his underworld contacts on me. It's not a risk worth taking."

Webber can be equally coy about himself, as it turns out. When asked his age, he demurs with: "In the words of Neil Young, 'Old enough to repaint but young enough to sell.'"

Here's what is known about the director's past. He was born in the south of England but grew up in West London (where he still lives today). He caught the movie bug in the aforementioned repertory theater, the Electric Cinema, where as a young man he fell under the sway of European art-house directors such as Jean-Luc Goddard and Max Ophüls (though he also acknowledges a debt to a more mainstream entertainer—Alfred Hitchcock). He began his career as an editor but eventually started calling the shots as a director of documentaries for English television. That segued into gigs directing TV dramas and—at last—his first feature film: *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, the 2003 adaptation of Tracy Chevalier's novel about the creation of a classic painting.

Given Webber's arty leanings, it makes sense when he says people have described *Hannibal Rising* as "Ingmar Bergman meets Wes Craven." Certainly, the director isn't simply interested in scaring the bejesus out of his audience (though he tries to do that too). What attracted him to the project, he says, was the chance to explore how an exceptionally brilliant young man could become an exceptionally vicious killer.

"Hannibal combines all that is great and good about humanity—civilized, cultured, refined man—with all that is bad—a malign bloodlust and savagery," he says. "He is both the best and worst of us. [Through him] we are able to peer into the savage interior of our own souls."

The savage interior of our souls?

Hey, maybe this guy is sick . . .



Anthony Hopkins as the original "Hannibal the Cannibal" in 2002's *Red Dragon*. Photo © Universal Studios



# NOT YOUR EVERYDAY POISON

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JOHN H. DIRCKX

**T**he first Saturday of June dawned bright and breezy. At seven A.M., barricades erected by workers from the Bureau of Streets converted the four blocks of DeWire Street that ran through the middle of downtown into a pedestrian mall. By eight o'clock the entire area was a seething riot of movement, color, and noise. In sidewalk booths along both sides of the street, more than a hundred dealers offered antiques, craft items, and unmitigated rubbish as The Largest Flea Market in the Universe began its fourth season.

Some of the vendors had set up elaborate pavilions where one could buy authentic antiques such as candlestick telephones, glass insulators, and all-steel roller skates in mint condition. Others had merely parked pickup trucks or four-wheeled trailers at the curb and not even bothered to unload their cargo of miscellaneous pieces of broken furniture and cardboard boxes full of mildewed books and rusty tools. Food stands interspersed among the vendors' booths filled the air with the pungent tang of fried onions and the heavy reek of warmed-over pizza. A dozen boomboxes simultaneously blared forth a dozen brands of crash 'n' squawk.

The City Council had originally approved the flea market because its backers promised that it would bring suburbanites and their credit cards flooding into the city on weekends. Like many projects driven by greed and administered by committees, it had backfired. The barricades snarled traffic for blocks around. Funeral processions starting from downtown churches were forced to make elaborate detours, and drivers of ambulances and fire engines had to radio ahead for clearance. Wildcat vendors who weren't registered with the program set up in parking lots on the periphery of the flea market zone. Thieves wandered brazenly through the area and walked off with whatever they could snatch from the ill-guarded tables. And by the time the flea market closed down at six P.M., the whole district looked like the aftermath of a circus hit by a hurricane.

But because it did indeed boost the revenues of downtown businesses on Saturdays, The Largest Flea Market in the Universe had been approved for another year.

J. Brownell Behr plodded briskly along the row of booths, his eye darting back and forth over the merchandise displayed, now fixing momentarily on something of interest, now leaping incuriously over a mound of obvious trash. When his cell phone rang, he whipped it to his ear without breaking his stride.

"Yes?"

"Hello," said a woman's voice. "Is this Mr. . . . Behr?"

"This is Dr. Behr. Were you calling about a patient?"

"No, sir. You don't know me. But I happen to be in a position to do you a favor."

"Oh? How's that?"

"I think you were just looking at a Buhl taboret in Hervey Dorjack's booth?"

Behr stood still and glanced swiftly around him to see if he could spot the caller, who must be within a few hundred feet. "That's right, I was."

"Well, I was in there too—actually standing outside looking at the lamps. After you gave Dorjack your name and cell phone number and left the booth, I heard him telling his helper that he had to leave for a while, but that if you came back he could come down as far as eight hundred on the price."

"Eight hundred! That's not even half of what he's got it marked."

"I know, but it's only about a tenth of what it's worth. It's genuine Buhl, you know. I'd grab it myself, but I'm a little short this week. Tell you what. If you get it for eight hundred, how about letting me have about a hundred of the difference?"

Dr. Behr rang off abruptly and headed for Dorjack's booth at a jog trot.

A little after eleven that morning, Loretta Burleigh left her stand unattended and drifted across the street to Hervey Dorjack's. As usual, the furniture dealer had rented two spaces, one for his twenty-four-foot van and one for the white canvas shelter under which most of his better pieces were displayed.

"I saw him come back," she said. "Did he buy it for eight hundred?"

Dorjack looked up from his lunch of steakburger, fries, and cole slaw. "He did. In fact, Billy's delivering it to his place out on Mallard Marsh Drive right now in the pickup."

"When do I get my five percent?"

"As soon as his check clears."

"It'll clear. J. Brownell Behr is the biggest pediatric dentist in town."

Mild alarm showed on Dorjack's horsy features. "You know this guy?"

"No, but he said he was *Doctor* Behr, so I looked him up in the phone book. I don't figure his check is going to bounce if he can afford a full page ad in the Yellow Pages."

"Hmph. If."

"So where's your main competitor today?"

"Dane?" Dorjack ran his eye up and down both sides of the street, now a teeming pedestrian mall. "He's not here, is he?"

"I just hope he's not off on another jag. The poor guy is killing himself."

"I thought he was in recovery."

"He's in recovery like I'm in the Girl Scouts."

Dorjack took a moment to ponder the aptness of that comparison. "He never does himself any good selling out here, anyway," he remarked. "He always thinks he has to point out every little scratch and flaw in a piece before the sale is final. He could make a lot more doing restoration work for me if he'd ever stay sober long enough to finish a job."

Loretta looked across the street to the modest stand, open to the bright sky, where she purveyed herbal teas and natural remedies. "Gotta go," she said. "Another sucker on the hook."

At ten o'clock next morning, Detective Sergeant Cyrus Auburn was enjoying his third glazed doughnut and his second cup of coffee while lazily making his way through the Sunday papers and listening with half an ear to a CD of Duke Ellington favorites, when the phone rang.

"You been to church yet, Cy?" asked his immediate superior, Lieutenant Savage, who had weekend duty.

Auburn yawned and looked at the clock. "No, and something tells me I'm not going to make it now."

"Our friend Stamaty at the coroner's office has a fatal poisoning that he says looks like it might turn out to be a homicide. He's kindly invited the Department of Public Safety to be in on the preliminary investigation."

"He's always so polite, isn't he? Asked for me by name, too, I bet. Is he at his office or at the scene?"

"Office, but only for another few minutes."

"Anything you want to tell me about the victim?"

"We already gave Stamaty everything we have. If I stop to give it to you, too, I'll be late for church."

Auburn's phone call caught Stamaty before he left his office at the courthouse, but they decided to meet near the scene, which



was north of downtown, since Auburn lived west and it would take him a few minutes to shave, shower, and dress. It was ten forty when Auburn pulled into the driveway of Dane Sackler's place off Huckleberry Trail.

The house was stone, very old, not very big. It might have been a farmhouse at one time, but none of the surrounding land had been under cultivation for at least a couple of generations. The woods had pretty completely reclaimed the territory and grew right up to the house on three sides. A large outbuilding, also deeply embowered by woods, evidently housed some kind of workshop. An old pickup truck was parked in the driveway between the buildings, pointing outward, with its tailgate almost touching the overhead door of the shed.

Stamaty's van was parked behind the truck, and he was standing next to it, watching the squirrels and listening to the birds.

"Are you sure we're inside the city limits here?" asked Auburn. "I kept thinking pretty soon somebody was going to stop me and ask to see my passport."

"According to the map," Stamaty assured him, "the corporation line runs along Seneca Mills Road." He reached into the van and pulled out a clipboard but recited the information without looking at it. "Dane Sackler, age forty-four, never married, professional carpenter and cabinetmaker, mostly self-employed during the past ten years. Sold new and restored furniture at antique shows and flea markets around the area. Didn't show up for one yesterday. His girlfriend couldn't get him to answer his phone so she came out here to his place to check on him. Found his truck in the driveway, workshop door unlocked, house locked, no answer when she knocked. She called Public Safety—"

"Didn't she have a key?"

Stamaty looked at him over the tops of his bifocals. "I asked her that, and she said she didn't know him that well. Your guys came and checked it out, beat the bushes for a while, finally decided to break in, and found him dead on the bathroom floor."

"And this was when?"

"Five thirty yesterday afternoon. He was fully dressed and there wasn't any sign of violence or any indication of an intruder. The girlfriend—her name's Loretta Burleigh—told them the only medical trouble she knew he had was a drinking problem, so they called the coroner's hotline. I got here about six thirty, took my pictures and drew my map, interviewed the cops and the girlfriend, and had the mortuary crew remove the body."

Stamaty pulled a slip of paper from under the others on the clipboard and placed it on top. "The autopsy last night showed

several bruises of various ages, not too unusual in an alcoholic. There were no head wounds and no external signs of an injury likely to cause death. When they opened him up they didn't find any internal injuries either. He had some inflammation of the stomach lining and an enlarged liver, probably due to his drinking, but there was nothing wrong with his heart or other vital organs."

"The lieutenant said something about poisoning?"

Stamaty threw up his hands in a colossal shrug of mock disappointment. "Just when I thought I had you on the edge of your metaphorical chair in suspense, I find out you already know everything."

"Not exactly everything. What was the poison?"

"A drug called picrotoxin. We'd all noticed that Sackler's pupils were dilated big time, and his skin had that lavender tinge you get with a fatal heart attack, so that's what we figured it would be. But after the forensic pathologist opened him up and found his coronaries were okay, he wondered about cocaine. He sent specimens of blood and stomach contents to the regional lab last night by courier, and they woke me up this morning to tell me that both specimens contained huge amounts of picrotoxin and smaller amounts of benzyl alcohol."

"So what are they—the latest recreational drugs, or did he just OD?"

"Neither one. Picrotoxin is a stimulant they once used to treat barbiturate overdoses, but it's been off the market for years because it was too tricky to use—caused convulsions."

"And death?"

"That too. But doctors used to give it by injection, and this stuff was in Sackler's stomach as well as his blood, so he evidently swallowed it."

"You mentioned some kind of alcohol too?"

"Benzyl alcohol. They think that was probably just a solvent for the other stuff, since picrotoxin doesn't dissolve very well in water."

"Where would Sackler have gotten hold of anything like that?"

"That's what I'm here to find out. Loretta Burleigh is pretty sure he wasn't into drugs and that he wasn't taking any medicine. I didn't find any medicine bottles yesterday, but I need to check further and take a better look around his workshop."

"Didn't this guy have any family?"

"Apparently not." Stamaty looked at his watch and picked up his research case. "You ready?" Taking a bunch of keys out of his pocket, he led Auburn up the porch steps.

"Where did the cops break in?" asked Auburn.

"Kitchen door, around the back. One of them, Georgie Wales, is

some kind of a carpenter. She borrowed some tools and hardware and a couple pieces of wood from the shop and secured the door from the inside."

The rooms in Sackler's house were small and square, with narrow windows and high ceilings. The place was immaculately tidy but barren of ornament. Sackler had apparently bought nonperishable wares, from toothpaste and shaving cream to canned soup, in wholesale quantities. There was enough beer stockpiled in the basement to supply a Prussian cavalry regiment on a week's furlough.

Auburn and Stamaty went from room to room, vying with each other in finding and pointing out clues to the personality and history of Dane Sackler. Stamaty took possession of a few opened containers of food in the refrigerator and on pantry shelves, sealing each in a plastic bag, which both he and Auburn signed. Neither in Sackler's bedroom nor in the solitary bathroom next to it, where his body had been found, were any prescription medicines in evidence. Headache and indigestion remedies, however, abounded, again in wholesale quantities, attesting to a life that was just one long hangover punctuated by binges. The wastebaskets contained lots of empty beer cans but no clues to the how or why of Sackler's demise. They spent a long time in the front bedroom Sackler had used as an office. An old desk and an iron filing cabinet, both unlocked, contained business records and correspondence, a savings account passbook, and several hundred dollars in cash in a worn manila envelope. The few personal papers provided no clues to any family ties, friendships, or enmities. An engagement calendar was virtually blank except for a dental appointment several weeks earlier. Sackler owned neither a computer nor an answering machine. They found no suicide note, no will, no life insurance policy, no lawyer's name, no book of personal phone numbers and addresses.

"I think we've pretty well kicked this place apart," said Stamaty as they were putting things back into the desk drawers.

"And also pretty well scrambled any trace evidence that might have been here when we arrived."

Stamaty chuckled. "That already happened yesterday. The cops and I were all over this place, not to mention the girlfriend, Burleigh. Not exactly standard protocol for managing a crime scene."

"Is this a crime scene?"

"That remains to be seen. Let's take a look at his shop."

They went down the dark, narrow stairs, and Stamaty locked up the house before depositing his specimens and Sackler's cash and

bankbook in his van. "I figure he went over to the house from here to use the bathroom," Stamaty said as he fitted a key into the door of the shed, "and didn't expect to be gone more than a couple minutes—otherwise he would have locked up because there's a lot of expensive stuff in here."

The rear section of the shed, to which the door gave admittance, was the workshop proper, while the front section, inside the overhead door at the end of the driveway, provided storage for dozens of pieces of furniture, antique and new, in various stages of construction or restoration. The building was equipped with fluorescent lighting and electric space heaters.

Against the rear wall of the shop stood an immense and solid workbench with racks of hand tools and cabinets full of hardware and supplies. Around the other walls stood an impressive array of woodworking machinery—lathe, bandsaw, belt and disk sander, router, jointer, planer. A paint shop set up in a kind of recess formed by some of the equipment contained brushes, buffing equipment, and cans of stain, varnish, shellac, and furniture polish. Apart from the rows of grimy windows, which probably hadn't been opened for years, the shed was as clean and orderly as the house.

"Look at this place," said Stamaty. "Everything as neat as the queen's front parlor, except—" He pointed to the end of the workbench, where a number of hand tools lay strewn in disorder around a small cabinet that stood, open and empty, on the bench. "We figured this is where he was working right before he went over to the house for the last time."

Auburn stepped closer and inspected the tools, which were smaller and more delicate than the kind used for woodworking. "What do you suppose these are, Nick? Some kind of manicure tools?"

"Get your tongue out of your cheek. You know good and well that's a set of lock picks. Apparently, he didn't have a key to that cabinet. Anyway, we didn't find one anywhere."

"Hmm. Maybe he did a little burgling on the side. What's all this junk?"

At the extreme right end of the bench stood a sturdy plastic container, not unlike a small wastebasket, full of odds and ends—framed photographs, three worn and tarry pipes with a pouch of tobacco and a packet of pipe cleaners, bundles of yellowed papers. On top of them lay a small irregular scrap of freshly sawed white pine on which the name "Herv" was written in pencil.

"Apparently stuff that came out of the cabinet. Look at the price tags on the tobacco and the pipe cleaners."

Auburn, increasingly conscious of the need to preserve trace evidence, used his pen to rummage through the various articles in the container. "From Bourdon's downtown," he said. "They went out of business when I was in high school."

"Bingo!" exclaimed Stamaty abruptly. "Here's exactly what we're looking for. Missed it cold yesterday." With a pair of tongs from his field kit he reached behind the cabinet and slid a wine bottle into view. According to its label, it was sweet vermouth. Only about two inches of dark fluid remained in the bottle.

"Not his everyday poison," said Auburn. "I didn't see any wine bottles in the house."

"Not his everyday poison is right," said Stamaty. "Look how brittle and discolored the label is. This bottle is about twenty years old."

"I thought wine was supposed to improve with age."

"Not cheap rocket fuel like this stuff, as you'd know if you weren't a teetotaler."

"I'm not a teetotaler, Nick. Beer gives me a headache, wine upsets my stomach—"

"And the hard stuff makes you see triple. Like I said, you're a teetotaler. This bottle is just as old as the other stuff from the cabinet. And I'll bet my socks this is where he got the picrotoxin. Look at this."

Stamaty pointed to a ring of stain that ran around the inside of the glass at an oblique angle, as if the bottle had remained in a slanted position for years, allowing the formation of a film of residue corresponding to the surface of the wine. When he tipped the bottle over to bring the ring into a horizontal position and then rotated it so that the ring lay parallel to the surface of the wine, it was evident that three or four ounces had disappeared from the bottle since the stain had formed.

Auburn voiced the obvious inference. "Sackler must have bought this cabinet with all the junk in it, picked the lock, found the wine, and—"

"Couldn't resist sampling it."

"Which raises the question what an old wine bottle was doing in this cabinet laced with a lethal dose of poison."

"And who it was originally meant for."

"And whether the guy it was originally meant for is now dead, buried, and long forgotten."

He helped Stamaty seal the bottle in a large specimen bag. Then they examined the materials in the plastic bin. The papers were faded photocopies of scholarly articles on naval history from various publications, all dated a couple of decades ago. There were

three framed pictures—a portrait photograph of a young woman, another of a young man in naval uniform, and a less formal shot showing both of them with a boy of seven or eight. “Could this be a picture of Sackler when he was a kid?” asked Auburn.

Stamaty squinted only briefly at the photograph before replying. “No. There’s no way. Out in the van I’ve got the pictures of him I shot yesterday. You can look at them and judge for yourself. But I’d say that kid couldn’t have grown up to be Dane Sackler. Are we done here?”

“Did you check his truck yesterday?”

“Couple tools, couple maps, lot of beer cans.” Stamaty showed him prints of the pictures he’d taken the day before. The man on the bathroom floor was stocky, with unkempt hair and a left little finger lacking the last joint, probably the result of a mishap with a bandsaw.

Before leaving the scene they apportioned the spoils. Stamaty added the wine bottle to the specimens of food he’d taken from the kitchen. He turned over Sackler’s driver’s license to Auburn, but since the coroner’s office had control of the decedent’s personal property until the next of kin was found or a court decided on the disposition of his estate, he kept the money and the keys to the house and the shed. Auburn took possession of the plastic bin and its contents. Tracing the origin of the cabinet would be a police matter if the wine bottle had indeed been the source of the poison that killed Sackler.

Before starting back downtown, Auburn called Loretta Burleigh on his cell phone and learned that she planned to be at home all afternoon. He followed Stamaty most of the way back downtown and then, breaking the peace of a Sunday noontide with a discreet farewell honk, he swung left on Victory Parkway to grab some lunch before proceeding to Burleigh’s place.

Business was slack at the fast-food restaurant where he stopped. From a quiet corner he called headquarters to inform Lieutenant Savage of the outcome of his rendezvous with Stamaty at Sackler’s place. At Auburn’s request, a clerk came on the line and read him the report filed by the Public Safety officers who had responded to Burleigh’s call and broken into Sackler’s house. By now a sketchy background probe had been completed on Sackler even though it was Sunday, and Auburn received that information also.

He found Ms. Burleigh setting out bedding plants along the front walk of her small brick house. “I hope you don’t mind talking to me out here,” she said, with a glance at the sky. “I want to get this done before it starts raining.”



"I don't think it's supposed to rain until after dark."

"It isn't. But every time I start digging in the dirt, the waterworks begin." She was a self-sufficient, down-to-earth woman of about fifty, with steel gray hair, a round flat face, a slow smile, and capable-looking hands. She wore no makeup and no rings, at least not while gardening. Auburn saw no tokens of grief for the late Dane Sackler, but then he didn't suppose she'd cried since the last time she fell off a tricycle.

Her purely objective account of the finding of Sackler's body matched the information that Auburn already had. She expected some information in return. "Have they done an autopsy yet?"

"Yes, ma'am. At this point it appears that death was probably due to poisoning, possibly accidental."

"Poisoning? Not just an overdose of alcohol?"

"When was the last time you saw Sackler alive?"

"Oh, gosh, I don't know. Weeks. He came over for dinner one time in about April. What kind of poison?"

"If you don't mind my asking, what was the nature of your relationship with Mr. Sackler?"

"I don't mind your asking. We were just friends." Period. She went on with her digging and planting in silence.

"Would you say he was the sort of person to take his own life? Had he been depressed recently? Had you and he had an argument, broken up . . . ?"

"No. You're not going to pin this on me," she said, good-naturedly but with conviction. "Depressed, yes. Suicide, maybe. But Dane and I never got very close. I felt sorry for him because he had this terrible drinking problem. He was a marvelous cabinetmaker when he was sober, but he couldn't hold a job."

"Had he been through detox or rehab as far as you know? Did he go to AA meetings?"

"I wouldn't know, but I doubt it. The first thing you have to do in AA is admit you have a drinking problem, and Dane never would."

"And you're pretty sure he didn't have any family?"

"He never talked about any family."

"The coroner's office hasn't given his name to the press yet, pending notification of next of kin, but they can't hold off forever, and somebody will have to make funeral arrangements."

"Well, don't look at me."

"Would you know if any of his friends, or possibly a business associate, went by the name of 'Herv'?"

"Sure. Hervey Dorjack. He deals in antiques, mostly furniture. Dane used to do restoration work for him. His store is one of those funky little places in the Castlemaine district."

"I think that's about all I need. Are you employed, ma'am?"

"I run the sign shop for the Bureau of Streets. Plus I have the local franchise for a company called Medicinal Virtues, which sells herbal remedies. I set up at sales, festivals, flea markets. That's how I met Dane."

"Did he take herbal remedies?"

"No, and neither do I. I like some of the teas because they don't have any caffeine in them, but I don't have much faith in herbal remedies myself. Like my dad used to say, donkeys eat weeds."

Surmising that the "funky little" shops in the Castlemaine district were just the sort of places to be open on Sunday afternoon, Auburn proceeded there without calling ahead. Hervey's Antiques and Uniques was indeed literally open for business, the front door propped wide to let in the warm afternoon breeze.

As Loretta Burleigh had told him, Dorjack dealt mostly in furniture. Wardrobes, bureaus, armoires, desks, apothecary cabinets, chairs, couches, and bedsteads of all styles and periods stood cheek by jowl in the garishly lighted store. Interspersed among the furniture were racks and glass-fronted cases displaying smaller items—clocks, lamps, pottery, silverware, figurines, antique toys, and all the other flotsam and jetsam that turn up in an antique shop.

"That fainting couch," said a voice at Auburn's elbow, "came out of an opera house in Philadelphia, when they tore it down back in the seventies." He turned to see a middle-aged man with a long, bony face, straggling mouse-colored hair, and the relentlessly ingratiating manner of a man who lives by talking money out of other people's pockets and into his own. "They say Charles Dickens used to lie on it drinking champagne and eating oysters during the intermissions of his dramatic readings. 'Course it's been reupholstered since then." He started to back away. "I can make you a good deal on anything you see here. Take your time, look around. The furniture costs less if you haul it yourself."

"Mr. Dorjack?"

Auburn had foreborne to try stemming the tide of salesmanship. Now he produced identification.

"Police," said Dorjack, with a languid lift of the eyebrows. "If you're looking for something that's been stolen, I'll cooperate fully. Like I always tell you guys, I've got receipts or bills of sale on all my furniture. Smaller items I usually buy in lots, and once a lot is broken up I can't always tell from my records where a piece came from. But on anything that's been here less than three or four months, I'll remember." Like his previous remarks about the fainting couch, all of this came across like a well-rehearsed spiel.

"I'm investigating the death of Dane Sackler."

Dorjack's jaw dropped momentarily, and his ebullient mood changed in an instant to one of solemnity. "Dane is dead? What'd he do, wreck his truck? I didn't hear it on the news."

"He was found dead at his home yesterday. Do you remember when was the last time you saw him?"

"Last Monday, right here. He did restoration work for me, repairing and refinishing damaged pieces. On Monday he brought back a couple of dining room chairs that he'd done over for me. I gave him another piece to work on. He drove away with it in his truck around two, two thirty Monday afternoon, and I never saw him again. What did he die of?"

"Did you talk to him on the phone since Monday?"

"No. He worked at his own pace—didn't like deadlines. And . . . he drank. I never bugged him to finish a job because I always knew he'd turn up with it eventually."

"This last job you gave him—would it have had something to do with a locked cabinet?"

"Exactly, exactly," nodded Dorjack, somewhat nonplussed. "An old telephone stand. In pretty fair condition, just needed some buffing up. But the compartment was locked, and I asked Dane to open it for me because I didn't have the key, and I didn't want to mar the finish trying to jimmy it open."

"Was the cabinet empty?"

"No, it wasn't. We could hear stuff clunking around in there. Figured it was just odds and ends, but who knows? Stands like that were manufactured by the hundred thousand back in the days when residential telephones were all tabletop units in basic black with rotary dials, and they all belonged to the telephone company."

Apparently already over his shock at learning of Sackler's death, Dorjack had his mouth in high gear again. Anyway, the mention of the cabinet had triggered yet another spate of verbiage. "Your telephone and your pad and pencil went on top, your phone book on the shelf underneath, and down in the cupboard you kept—you name it, from shoe polish and spare lightbulbs to the fancy ashtrays you put out when company came over."

And sweet vermouth, thought Auburn.

"Can you tell me where you got that cabinet?"

"Yes, sir. I bought it with several other pieces from a man named Guy Iddings, who used to run that big used furniture store on Heron Pike. He sold out back in March or April and retired to Florida. Something interesting turn up in the cabinet?"

"We'd like to find out who the last owner was."

"I've got Guy's address here somewhere if you want it. But frankly, I doubt if he'll be able to help you trace that piece. He bought and sold stuff right and left, and his records were pretty sketchy, to say the least."

Auburn made a note of Iddings's name and current address. "Did Sackler seem his usual self when you saw him on Monday?" he asked.

"Oh sure. He was always quiet—sort of lost in his own thoughts. Hey, he didn't kill himself, did he?"

"We don't think so. Do you know if he had any family? The coroner's office is still looking for the next of kin."

"Dane never talked about any family to me. Never talked much at all."

"Do you know of any other regular business contacts he had, any close friends?"

"No, sir, I don't. He was a loner—practically a hermit. Lived all by himself out in the country. I guess you know that. Only person I can think of who knew him besides myself was Lori Burleigh. Maybe you know her—she works for the city, keeps track of all the traffic signs."

"Thanks, I've already talked to Ms. Burleigh."

As Auburn left the shop, Hervey Dorjack was heading for the back room, quite probably to call Ms. Burleigh.

At headquarters, Auburn reported in to the second watch commander and requested record searches and security probes on Burleigh, Dorjack, and Iddings. An attempt to reach Guy Iddings by telephone was unsuccessful. After locking the plastic bin and its contents from Sackler's workshop in his office closet, he went home for the day.

He found the Sunday papers and the breakfast dishes exactly where he'd left them. He spent an hour cruising the Internet and learning about picrotoxin and benzyl alcohol.

Monday morning's newspaper contained a brief note about the finding of Sackler's body on Saturday and a plea for information about next of kin. Shortly after Auburn arrived at headquarters, Stamaty called to report that the liquid in the wine bottle they'd found in Sackler's workshop contained a very high concentration of picrotoxin, along with traces of benzyl alcohol. None of the foods from the kitchen contained any poison.

"I dusted the wine bottle for latent prints," said Stamaty, "since I've got Sackler's prints and I doubt if you do. And his were absolutely the only prints I found on it."

Auburn told him the results of his interview with Dorjack. "I did some research at home last night on picrotoxin, Nick. A solution

of picrotoxin in benzyl alcohol, called 'pickle juice,' is used to dope racehorses."

"Well, you're one up on me. Good luck on tracing that bottle."

Auburn placed another call to Iddings's number in Florida and again got no answer.

He unlocked the closet and got out the plastic bin of articles that had presumably come from the same place as the poisoned bottle of sweet vermouth. He set aside the pipes, the package of tobacco (hard and brittle as broken glass), and the pipe cleaners ("All-Ready Pipe Cleaners - 30 ct.," of which nineteen remained) as unlikely to be of much help.

Before handling the framed photographs, he dusted the glass for prints and found only useless smudges. Disassembling the frames revealed only the expected mats and padding. The pictures had been taken by the Haverska Studio, the local firm that had done Auburn's high school yearbook photos almost twenty years ago. A call to the studio elicited the information that negatives were retained for only one year.

At first glance the photocopies of articles on naval history, mostly referring to the nineteenth century, seemed to be no more promising than the other materials. But then he noticed that one set of them was in a manila envelope, along with a mail routing slip bearing the printed name of the Caldwell Building and a handwritten room number, 302.

The Caldwell Building, on the western fringe of downtown, had been demolished fifteen or twenty years ago to make room for a more modern office complex. Instead of calling Records and asking a clerk to look up the information in the Department's library of old city directories, Auburn went down the back stairs and looked it up himself. The tenant listed for Suite 302 in the Caldwell Building the year before the building was torn down was Pretty Penny Imports, Stephen J. Callender, proprietor.

An entry in the alphabetical section of that directory gave a home address for Callender on Potomac Street and indicated that his wife's name was Penelope. The only Callender in the current directory was Leonard, an attorney. But Pretty Penny Imports was still in business, now with offices in the Patterson Tower Annex, and the current proprietor was listed as H. T. Marienthal.

Glad for an excuse to spend some time outside in the sun, Auburn walked across the street to the Bureau of Vital Statistics in the courthouse. There he learned that Stephen J. Callender of Potomac Street had died seventeen years ago at the age of thirty-seven. His death certificate listed the cause of death as a heart attack, with hypertension as a contributing cause. However, no

autopsy had been done. Callender's body had been cremated.

Stamaty and associates had been ready to attribute Dane Sackler's death, at the age of forty-four, to a heart attack until the autopsy turned up the real cause. Had Callender, at thirty-seven, also succumbed to a fatal dose of picrotoxin?

Auburn walked seven blocks farther to the newspaper office. The usual midmorning downtown throng had been swelled by dozens of kids lately released from the thralldom of school for the summer. As he made his way north, keeping to the sunny side of the street, he thought back seventeen years in his own life. That was the year his paternal grandfather died. The year he broke up with Earleen after eighteen months of a relationship that was going nowhere. The year he dropped out of college after a semester of pre-law and nearly killed himself working construction for four months during the coldest winter on record.

An old schoolmate of Auburn's, with whom he'd carried on a mock feud for more than twenty-five years, was in charge of the file room at the newspaper office.

"I'm looking for an obituary on a Stephen J. Callender," Auburn told him after a perfunctory exchange of insults, "and any other news items about him from that same year."

"What year did he die?"

"The exact date of death is right here, along with his name." Auburn handed him a slip of paper. "Think you can decipher that? I heard you finally passed remedial reading in night school."

"Gimme that. Hey, I heard there's a new law now that says you black guys can work for the city. And carry guns. Not loaded, of course."

"Hansen, if you don't have that obituary on this counter in about three minutes, I'm going to start some target practice down here, and then we'll see what's loaded and what isn't."

It took more than three minutes because everything from that far back had been transferred to spools of microfilm, and the relevant spool had to be laboriously cranked through a reader by hand. But the results were well worth the effort. Callender's obituary notice was accompanied by a head-and-shoulders portrait photograph that pretty obviously represented an older version of the man who appeared in two of the photographs from the telephone cabinet.

The obituary notice itself provided only the usual information about education, military service (discharged from the Navy with the rank of lieutenant), survivors (brother Leonard, wife Penelope, son Kyle), and funeral arrangements. But a lengthier news item in the same edition of the paper stated that Callender, proprietor of



Pretty Penny Imports, had been found unconscious in his office by a coworker and that rescue efforts by paramedics had been unavailing.

A search of the newspaper's computerized alphabetical index elicited two news items pertaining to Callender from earlier in the same year. One of these reported a small warehouse fire that had destroyed some merchandise belonging to Pretty Penny Imports. Fire authorities suspected arson. The other article listed Callender among recipients of an award from the Downtown Business Alliance for "enterprise and integrity."

When Auburn returned to the office, he found that background checks had come in from Records. Loretta Burleigh was squeaky clean, but the Better Business Bureau and the Robbery Division had files on Dorjack and Iddings. Both had poor customer satisfaction records, and both had been caught fencing stolen merchandise, though neither had ever been convicted of wrongdoing.

After bringing his computer file on the Callender death up to date, Auburn took a printout of it, along with other relevant papers he'd accumulated so far, to Lieutenant Savage's office. The lieutenant seemed neither more nor less dour and unflappable than usual this morning after his weekend on duty. He sat through Auburn's recital of the case, looking as solemn as an archbishop with a toothache.

"So," said Auburn, summing up, "it looks like Sackler's death was just an unfortunate accident. He was pretty much of a loser—a problem drinker with no close friends but apparently no enemies either—anyway, not a threat to anybody. But somebody put the poison in that wine bottle for a reason, and I think the reason was to wipe out Stephen J. Callender, seventeen years ago."

"Which would be impossible to prove without an autopsy, even if it had happened seventeen days ago. I don't know, Cy. This sounds to me like another one of your long shots. Next thing I know, you'll be trying to figure out who slipped the hemlock to Socrates."

"I think we already know that," said Auburn. "Napoleon might be more of a challenge. Or maybe Mozart."

"Or how about 'Who put the arsenic in Beethoven's Fifth?' Where do you want to go with this from here?"

"Well, I've got a list of survivors. And among the survivors, as somebody once said, you usually find the murderer."

"If there is one. And if the murderer is still alive by the time you get around to looking for him."

"Callender's widow has either died, moved away, or remarried. Anyway, there's no Penelope Callender in the current city

directory or phone book, and she's not listed by her maiden name of Penelope Fries either. But there's a Leonard Callender practicing law in town."

"What else are you working on right now?"

"Just routine stuff. I'll be in court Thursday morning when Orlie Prewitt comes up before the grand jury."

"Okay. See how many of these people are still around. I mean around here. I'm not authorizing any long-distance calls to New Zealand or any trips to L.A. Go slow, and be careful what you say and who you say it to. But my gut feeling is that if Callender did die of whatever hellish concoction was in that wine, he put it there himself."

Now thoroughly captivated by the beauties and attractions of this summer day, Auburn set out immediately on foot for the Patterson Tower Annex, where Pretty Penny Imports was currently doing business. Along the way he stopped for lunch at The Wedge, a popular downtown restaurant squeezed into an impossibly narrow smidgen of land. The diners, most of them regulars from nearby stores and offices, stood at tables as narrow as windowsills, bumping elbows with one another and breathing a stifling atmosphere of tobacco smoke, burning grease, melted cheese, and scorched onions. But Auburn knew by experience that his digestive system could handle most of the items on the menu here without rebellion.

According to the sign on the door, Pretty Penny Imports dealt in "Asian and East Indian specialties," which might mean just about anything. The receptionist, dark and middle aged, looked up from her computer monitor to glare at him like a sleek, overfed cat whose afternoon nap has just been interrupted by a snarling Chihuahua.

"Is Mr. Marienthal in this afternoon?"

"Did you have an appointment?" Her breathy, cooing voice reminded Auburn of a commercial for baby food or a birthing center.

"No, I'm sorry, I don't." Auburn showed identification. "If he isn't busy I have just a couple of routine questions I'd like to ask him."

"I'll see."

Hart "Hank" Marienthal received Auburn in his private office, a big messy room with a view of the street. A huge message board plastered with dozens of scribbled notes covered one wall. On the long table below it, two computers lay nearly buried amid stacks of papers, file folders, cartons, and a nondescript litter of samples, broken china, brass figurines, and pottery.

Marienthal was fiftyish and chunky, with a slightly disarranged

hairpiece. He cast a perfunctory glance at Auburn's badge and motioned him to a chair in the corner. "How can I help you?"

People react differently to a visit from a police detective. Some welcome it as a diversion from their dreary daily routine. Others, whose consciences perhaps aren't quite so clear, betray anxiety, impatience, even open hostility. Because his fingernails were chewed to the quick, and all the pens and pencils strewn over the worktable showed tooth marks, Auburn surmised that Marienthal's flushed face and jittery manner were probably chronic rather than a reaction to this visit.

"I'm not sure you can. How long have you owned this company?"

"About fifteen years." Marienthal had seated himself in his spring-backed desk chair and now sat hunched forward like a prizefighter waiting for the starting bell. "Why?"

"Were you acquainted with the former owner, Stephen Callender?"

"Well, sure. I mean, I worked for him for seven or eight years."

"So you were with the company at the time of his death?"

"That's correct. What's this all about?"

"My investigation doesn't have to do directly with your company. I'm trying to trace a piece of furniture . . ."

Marienthal was shaking his head vigorously. "We've never handled any furniture." He said it with such finality that it was evident that he now expected Auburn to go away immediately and leave him alone.

"What I have in mind is a piece of office furniture—probably a telephone stand that belonged to Mr. Callender."

"Anything like that is long gone. In those days we were in a different office, over on Second Street. When they tore down the building we moved in here and got all new furniture."

"Do you know what happened to the old furniture?"

"Not for sure. Steve's brother Len, who's a lawyer, handled all that. You could ask him—he's in the book. But I think he just had a junk dealer clear all the stuff out after we left. What was it you said you're trying to find out?"

"Were there other employees besides yourself at the time Callender died?"

"Just his wife Penny."

"Would you know how I might get in touch with her?"

Marienthal leaned back in his chair and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Hey, Pen! Come in here a minute."

When the receptionist appeared in the doorway, Auburn finally recognized her as the woman in the pictures from the telephone cabinet.

"This is Penny," explained Marienthal. "She did all Steve's secretarial work. In his will he left the whole business to her, and not much else. I was the only one on the payroll, and after a year or two of that she decided it would be cheaper just to marry me and keep it all in the family." Marienthal leaned forward again, elbows on knees. "He's asking about Steve, Pen. Something about a cupboard he had in his office over on Second Street."

"Telephone cabinet," said Auburn. "With a locked compartment."

She paused to reflect before answering. "I remember that," she said. "It was walnut. Ancient, and the top was all scratched. But my brother-in-law, Len, who handled Steve's estate, sold all the old furniture to a dealer. Not right away, but before we moved in here."

"Would you remember what he kept in that cabinet?"

"Oh, goodness no. Just odds and ends, I guess. Why do you ask?"

"I understand Mr. Callender died quite suddenly."

She blinked at the abrupt change of topic. "Well, suddenly, yes. But it wasn't exactly a big surprise. He had high blood pressure, he drank too much, he was overweight, and he smoked pipes and cigars constantly. I warned him and the doctor warned him, but he just wouldn't take care of himself. And one fine Sunday afternoon he had himself a coronary, working at the office when he should have been home relaxing."

"Did he drink at the office?"

"Oh my, yes. He had a complete bar with a refrigerator and everything, and it wasn't just to entertain the people he did business with either."

Deciding it was probably time to draw this preliminary interview to a close, Auburn left the Marienthals looking a bit bewildered.

The day had grown windy, and it was starting to smell like rain as he walked six more blocks to the offices of Callender and Cannon, Attorneys at Law. Leonard Callender, Esq., was in conference, but after a wait of about twenty minutes Auburn was ushered into a dark, plush office whose last visitor had been wearing a heady lavender scent.

Leonard looked about the way his brother Stephen would probably have looked had he survived another seventeen years of overindulgence and dissipation. His neck was exactly the same circumference as his head, and he had the fleshy face of a man who takes particularly good care of himself and never on any account gets up from the dinner table until he has reached the stage of repletion.

Having had a great deal more experience with police officers than the Marienthals, Callender managed to seem frank and coop-

erative while holding his cards very close to his vest. "Steve's furniture? I had a dealer come in and clear it all out. Junk dealer because most of it was nothing but. Steve inherited it all from our dad, who started the import business back in the forties, right after World War II. He called it Callender Trading, Limited, back then, and all the merchandise came in from occupied Japan."

"I'm particularly interested in a telephone cabinet that came from your brother's office," said Auburn.

"Interested in what way? That's a long time ago."

Auburn chose his words carefully. "The cabinet turned up in the possession of an antique dealer. The locked compartment had some articles in it that we're trying to trace. I don't imagine you'd remember that cabinet, would you?"

Callender ran his hand over his flabby jowls in a gesture probably meant to signify deep abstraction. "When Steve died, my sister-in-law left his office just the way it was for a long time—sort of like a shrine, the way people do. Then they got an eviction notice because the building was going to be torn down, and they decided to scrap all the old furniture."

"I understand you handled the estate."

"That's correct. I was Steve's executor. His sole heir was his widow Penny."

"Didn't they have a son?"

"Kyle. He was ten or twelve when Steve died. He was specifically disinherited under the terms of the will. That's just a legal convention to simplify probate, the tacit assumption being that the widow will look out for the kid until he can look out for himself. Kyle's a veterinarian in St. Louis now."

"Was cremation also provided for in the will?"

"Yes, sir." He squirmed ponderously in his expensive desk chair. "Are you investigating this cabinet or are you investigating Steve?"

"Maybe a little bit of both," said Auburn smoothly.

"You said you found some things in a locked cupboard from Steve's office. Anything of value?"

"No monetary value, no. But possibly having some connection with a routine investigation I'm working on."

"Well, if there were any locked cupboards among Steve's furniture, the keys had probably been lost by the time we disposed of the stuff. I guess we figured anything in locked drawers or cupboards was just junk of no particular value—spare stationery, paper clips, that kind of thing."

"What about liquor?"

Callender's eyes opened wide in spite of his professional skill at maintaining a poker face. "I doubt it. Steve had a wet bar right in

his office. That we sold separately to a guy from Pittsburgh, now that I remember."

"I've talked to Mr. and Mrs. Marienthal. Did your brother have anyone working for him at the time of his death besides them?"

"No. It was always pretty much of a family operation and purposely kept small. The cost of renting enough warehouse space for a large stock and maintaining good security on it is astronomical."

"Do you know if the company ever had any trouble with the authorities—police, Customs . . ."

"You mean was Steve smuggling dope? No way, sir. He had a horrendous drinking problem—three Manhattans before lunch and three more afterward—but in his business dealings, he was straight as an arrow."

"What about his successor, Marienthal?"

"That's a horse of a different color," said Callender, looking away briefly. "I'd never accuse Hank of handling narcotics, but he's always been a grand master in the Order of the Golden Fleece. Caveat emptor and all that. I wish you could be more specific as to what you're looking for. I mean, did somebody find narcotics in that locked cupboard after all these years?"

"No, sir. It's nothing like that. Just a routine investigation. Thanks very much for your time and your help."

When Auburn regained the street, the sunshine was gone and stray drops of rain were flying before a blustery wind. And since it was nearly three o'clock and he was now a mile away from headquarters, he took a bus back. After ordering records searches on Leonard Callender and the Marienthals, he spent a few minutes updating his files and organizing his thoughts before seeking another interview with Lieutenant Savage. But the lieutenant was expected to be out of his office for the remainder of the shift.

Auburn was beginning to wonder if this investigation wasn't, as Savage had hinted, just a wild goose chase. But he felt he ought to pursue one more lead before giving up the whole job as a hopeless quest. Within a quarter of an hour he was en route to the funky little shops in the Castlemaine district.

Again he found Hervey Dorjack's antique shop open for business, though the front door was now shut against the driving wind. Dorjack called to him from the cashier's desk at the rear of the store. "Be with you in a minute. Look around all you want. The furniture is cheaper if you haul it yourself."

A woman customer wearing an ankle-length black dress and an extravagant amount of eye makeup was arguing with Dorjack about a wooden bowl.



"It has some kind of smell that I'm allergic to," she said. "I can't be in the same room with it for five minutes without coughing and sneezing."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that, of course," said Dorjack, not sounding the least bit sorry, "but what do you expect me to do about it?"

"I want my eighty dollars back."

"Mm-hmm. Do you see that sign up there, ma'am—'All Sales Final'? I didn't just put it up today. I can't take merchandise back again once it's sold. I might buy the bowl from you for fifty."

After finally getting rid of her and incidentally reacquiring the bowl, he came forward to where Auburn was waiting.

"Didn't recognize you from back there, officer," he said. "Haven't heard that one for a while."

"I'm sorry?"

"Says she's allergic to the fruit bowl she bought last week. The silly nitwit just decided she didn't like the looks of it, or maybe her husband threw a fit because she spent so much on it. Did you ever get in touch with Iddings?"

"Actually, I didn't," said Auburn, "but we managed to trace that cabinet anyway. The reason I came back today was to check on something else. When I was here yesterday I noticed you had a couple of small articles for sale with the initials SJC on them."

"Articles such as . . . ?"

"One was a wooden cigar box—"

Dorjack nodded. "Humidor. Brazilian rosewood. Sorry, but I sold it just this morning. Didn't get half of what it was worth because of that monogram carved in the lid."

"There was also a penholder of some kind with the same initials."

Another nod. "Writing set. I've got it back here now. Things that small tend to walk away sooner or later if they're not under lock and key." He led the way to a set of glass-fronted display cases. "There it is. Double pen stand—one for black ink, one for red. Matching blotter holder and scissors case. All solid cherry. Just what the well-equipped business executive needed to set up shop back around nineteen forty. A nice set, good condition, too, but once again those monograms are going to kill me."

"Can you tell me where you got these things?"

"Yes and no." He swept the store and the street outside with a quick glance to make sure no one was getting ready to walk off with something that wasn't under lock and key. "Come on back here a minute."

The space behind the shop was crammed to the rafters with three-legged chairs, cracked mirrors, cabinets with missing hardware, and similar wreckage. A narrow path led among this jumble

of damaged furniture to a heavy steel door opening to the alley, and just inside that door was a workbench where Dorjack evidently did some sketchy restoration and refinishing work.

"I wonder if you're old enough to remember these," he said, stopping next to a heavy oak office desk. Grasping what looked like a drawer handle on the left front, he swung it upward so that half of the top of the desk folded back and a heavy square shelf rose into position in the cavity thus revealed. "Disappearing typewriter desk. Your Royal Standard, all thirty-five pounds of it, would be bolted down to this platform."

Just now the platform was occupied not by a Royal typewriter but by a battered pasteboard box containing a motley assemblage of dusty, rusty relics—a stapler, a paper punch, a cracked ruler, pens and pencils (most of them chewed), a pair of manicure scissors with a broken blade, loose papers, erasers, paper clips, and much more of the same.

"This desk," said Dorjack, "and all the stuff in it came from the same place as that telephone cabinet you were trying to trace—Guy Iddings's warehouse. But the cigar humidor and the writing set were the only things I found in here that seemed worth putting out in the shop."

He pushed aside a couple of yellowed spiral notebooks and pulled out a flat case of tarnished metal with an imitation telephone dial mounted on the top. "Maybe these were before your time too. If you want to find Jones's phone number, you dial J." As he did so, the lid popped up to reveal a page filled with scribbled names and numbers.

"How much would you want for that and those two notebooks—if I haul them myself?" asked Auburn, struggling to conceal his elation. Just as he was becoming convinced of the futility of following so cold and faint a trail, he had recognized Hank Marienthal's spiky handwriting in both the phone directory and the notebooks.

It was close to five P.M. when Auburn took the elevator to the top floor at headquarters and turned over the materials he'd bought from Hervey Dorjack to Sergeant Kestrel in the forensic lab. He explained to Kestrel that he wanted photocopies of all pages that had any writing on them as soon as possible and asked that the originals be kept secure for possible future use as evidence. Kestrel promised to comply, grousing mildly about the hiatus of seventeen years in the chain of custody in which the materials had been kept.

Auburn ate in the canteen that evening so as to be able to start working on the photocopies as soon as they were available. Investigating a seventeen-year-old homicide had begun to look a

little less hopeless now that he had access to materials from Callender's office that had been stored in a kind of time capsule since the era of his death.

At first the names and addresses, dates and phone numbers recorded in the notebooks seemed humdrum and routine. Then something clicked and sent Auburn back to his computer. By the time he finally turned it off and locked up for the day, the day had turned to black night.

During the following week, other investigations occupied most of his time, but work on the Callender case moved steadily forward. Auburn had frequent interviews with Savage and other officials, including authorities at a federal prison in Atlanta. At length, accompanied by Patrolman Carl Bystrom, he returned to the Pretty Penny offices at the Patterson Tower Annex with an arrest warrant.

They sought and obtained a private interview with Marienthal, whose anxiety level didn't seem to have lessened since Auburn's last visit.

"Come on in," he said, clearing files off a chair so they could both sit down.

"We won't need to sit," Auburn told him. "We'll have to ask you to come over to headquarters with us for formal questioning in connection with the death of Stephen J. Callender. Before you say anything, you should know that we have sworn testimony from Siang."

Marienthal froze, his complexion blotchy red and white, his breath coming in audible gasps. Auburn read him his constitutional rights according to the Miranda decision and told him he could talk briefly with his wife.

The next few minutes were almost as painful for Auburn as they were for the Marienthals. He was pretty sure that Penny Marienthal had had no prior knowledge of the murder of her former husband by her future husband. Mute and shaken, she locked the office and followed them to headquarters in Marienthal's car.

Later that morning Hart Marienthal was booked on charges of first-degree murder. After lunch Auburn visited Nick Stamaty's office in the courthouse to bring him up to date on the case and hand over copies of relevant documents and reports.

Although it was ultimately up to the coroner to decide whether a death was due to homicide, suicide, or accident, the official ruling was quite often based on information and evidence gathered not by the coroner's investigators or the forensic pathologist, but by the Department of Public Safety. Particularly was this apt to occur in a case of homicide. Although Dane Sackler's death would now be signed out as an accident, the case of Stephen J. Callender

would probably have to be reopened and a revised death certificate filed.

Stamaty examined the papers that lay spread out on his desk. "I'm impressed, Cy. How did you ever put all this together?"

"Just a lucky hit. When I was researching picrotoxin, I kept coming across old news items about a notorious series of cases where it had been used to dope horses. A well-known businessman and racehorse owner in Singapore named Siang Bock Chee was warned off two racetracks there and eventually fined and banned from racing by the local racing commission. The reason was that on several occasions random testing of horses he'd run showed they'd been doped with picrotoxin, a k a pickle juice.

"Considering how far off the beaten path picrotoxin is, I knew it couldn't be pure coincidence when Siang Bock Chee's name turned up four times in these old notes and records in Marienthal's handwriting. And things got even more interesting when we learned that Siang was in a federal penitentiary serving a thirty-year sentence on narcotics charges. He had nothing much to lose, and a lot to gain, by cooperating with the authorities.

"He asked for immunity from prosecution for his involvement in Callender's murder and then traded his sworn testimony about Marienthal for a reduction in his sentence. I've got a videotape of his deposition at the office. Seventeen years ago he shipped a bottle of pickle juice to Marienthal with the understanding that it was going to be used to commit a homicide. The label said 'Transcendental Balm - Prevents Aging.'"

"I like this guy's sense of humor," said Stamaty. "I bet he keeps all the other cons in stitches."

"To dope a horse with picrotoxin they give it a big slug by injection. But a racehorse weighs half a ton. To a human being, one gulp is lethal. I imagine the stuff tastes like oven cleaner, but Callender drank and smoked so heavily that he probably never noticed what he was swallowing until it was too late. He lived on Manhattans—had a private bar in his office, bought bourbon and sweet vermouth by the truckload. All Marienthal had to do was spike one of the bottles of vermouth with pickle juice and sit back and wait for results."

"Motive?"

"Siang isn't admitting it, but I think he was shipping narcotics to Marienthal along with the brass incense burners and imitation-ivory Buddhas. Callender probably got wind of that and was threatening to kick Marienthal out, maybe even turn him over to the authorities. We haven't figured out yet whether Marienthal planned to marry the widow from the start or

whether that was just an afterthought. But I'm convinced she wasn't in on the homicide."

"How so?"

"Because she's the reason the poisoned vermouth never got poured down the drain. Marienthal was just a hired hand back then. He managed to slip into Callender's office and doctor the vermouth, but once Callender was dead, his widow locked up his office and Marienthal couldn't get back in there to cover up his tracks. She's not sure how the bottle got locked in that cabinet, but she does remember that they couldn't find the key later on. Marienthal must have had a couple of bad days worrying that somebody would discover the cause of Callender's death. But once the body was cremated he could forget about that bottle. And he did."

"So have you got a confession?"

"He hasn't said 'boo.'"

Stamaty shuffled the papers into a neat stack and put his hand flat on top of it. "Do you really think this is going to work in court?"

"The city prosecutor thinks so. He flew his assistant, McEwen, down to Atlanta to take that deposition. And it looks like a mighty persuasive mass of circumstantial evidence to me."

"I'll grant you that, but I doubt if the grand jury will buy it without an autopsy on Callender."

"Well, you can't win 'em all." Auburn snapped his briefcase shut. "Mozart wasn't cremated, was he? Maybe I'll apply for an order to exhume him."

Stamaty gave him a tragic look. "Bad news, Cy. Nobody knows where Mozart was buried."

## HOW TO SOLVE AN ACROSTIC

Using the definitions, fill in as many words as you can in the column on the right. Then transfer the letters from the column to their corresponding places in the diagram. A black square in the diagram indicates the end of a word. When completed, the diagram will yield a mystery-themed quotation. The initial letters of the words in the righthand column spell out the name of the author and the work from which the quote was taken.

# DYING WORDS

ACROSTIC BY ARLENE FISHER



For instructions on how to solve the acrostic puzzle, turn to page 85. The solution to the puzzle will appear in the May issue. The solution to last month's puzzle is on page 31.

## DEFINITIONS

## WORDS

A. Tammany Hall, e.g.	133	6	82	37	194	107	31												
B. Transferred (a claim) to another, in law	115	65	151	182	47	10	38	24											
C. Hardly the Four Hundred	84	149	52	7	158	91	170	181											
D. Gives occasion	180	60	95	206	127	73	15												
E. Blah	168	97	183	11	208	55	69	89	159	129									
F. Former Non-Aligned Movement country	144	202	111	132	29	67	18	117	81	94									
G. Rationalist's bane	195	76	41	88	147	124	1	125											
H. Showed disdain	56	175	25	142	36	190	108												
I. Conundrum, maybe	165	103	184	173	22	152													
J. Mist source	154	162	59	86	174	121	43	148											
K. Prison of cinema	161	140	71	98	176	93	207	12	33										
L. Earnest, steady effort	172	204	74	157	20	192	51	139											
M. Censor's demand, perhaps	62	77	26	44	199	137	9	166											
N. — <i>American</i>	79	70	40	141	110	66	120	102	177	196									
O. Flagrant	96	114	39	130	178	85	50	160	156										
P. Instrument with wooden bars	104	100	116	53	35	90	188	179	78										





# PANDORA'S DEFENSE

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GILBERT M. STACK

**P**atrick was already in jail before Corey even heard about the murder.

They were still in Cheyenne after their trouble earlier that year in Denver. Corey was a bare knuckle boxer making the circuit of western towns where Patrick, his trainer and manager, arranged fights for him. They'd been doing this since 1870—four short years—and hoped that Corey could keep up the pace for a few more.

Then the murder happened, and all of their dreams and plans were derailed. Frantic with worry, Corey pushed his way through the crowd milling about the jail and tried to get through the front door. A burly deputy opposed him.

"I've got to see Patrick," Corey told him. In retrospect, he might have gotten farther if he'd asked to see the marshal. The deputy did not move.

"No one sees the murderer!"

"Patrick didn't murder anyone," Corey protested. He didn't actually know this to be the case, but he'd known Patrick long enough to believe in his innocence without proof to the contrary.

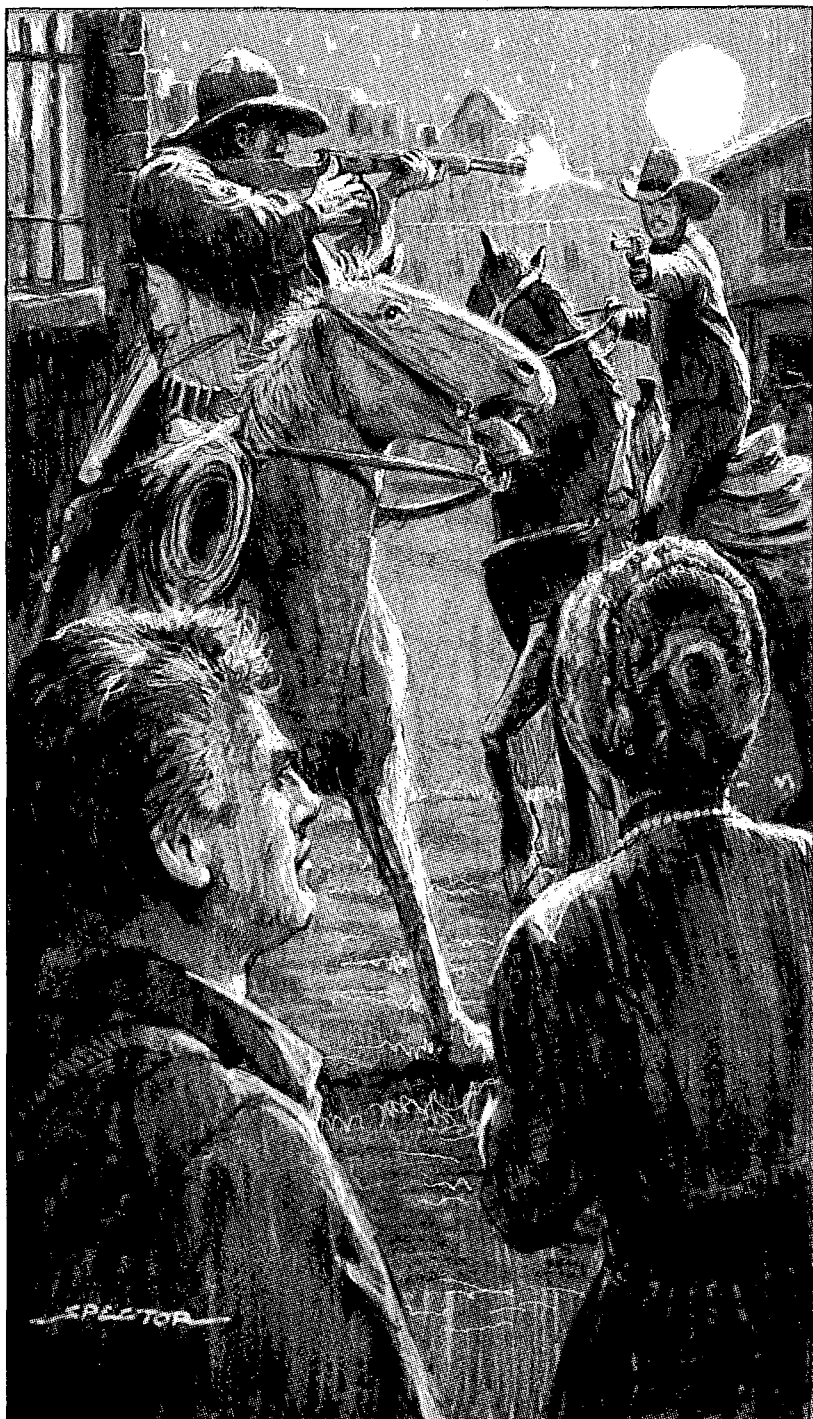
"Found leaning over the dead man with the bloody knife in his hands," the deputy corrected Corey. "He killed him sure enough. Now get out of here. You can talk to the marshal in the morning."

Corey knew something was missing from that story as Patrick didn't carry a knife, but the deputy clearly wasn't interested in listening.

Corey sized-up the man. His neck and shoulders were thick, but Corey doubted he would really prove much trouble if Corey chose to assert himself. Still, Mrs. Callaghan didn't raise any boys dumb enough to pick a fight with a marshal's deputy, and that was before Corey took into account the likely reaction of the milling crowd. And there might be another way to get to Patrick this evening.

"In the morning, then," Corey conceded.

"And don't come none too early."





Corey made his way around the side of the town jail. The crowd still milling about was more excited than angry. From their scattered conversations they all seemed to believe that Patrick was guilty. He had, it seems, literally been captured red-handed.

Corey eased up to a barred window in the back of the building and whispered his friend's name. "Patrick?"

When there was no response he called again, louder this time. Someone in the next cell stirred and came to the window. "Who's there?"

Corey's actions and Patrick's response attracted the attention of a small knot of men who ambled over to hear what was happening. Corey chose to ignore them, moving over to the window looking in on Patrick. "It's me."

"Corey, me lad, saints preserve me, but I'm glad to see you. You've got to get me out of here. They think I killed Bob Tanner."

"That's because you stuck your knife in him!" one of the spectators interjected. His friends laughed heartily and slapped him on the back.

"Anyone who knows me," Patrick retorted, "knows I don't carry a knife."

"Then I guess no one knows you," the man responded, still laughing, "because everyone knows that's what you did."

"Ignore him, Patrick," Corey counseled, "and tell me what happened."

"Ignore me?" Corey assumed the man had been out drinking. His steps weren't quite right as he made his way closer to the boxer. His friends straggled in behind him.

"Friend," Corey told him, "I have no quarrel with you. I have bigger problems. My trainer, here, has been arrested for murder and I want to know what happened." Corey took a deep breath and suppressed the urge to threaten the man. He was a stranger in Cheyenne, an Irish stranger. If there was a fight here it was he who would wind up in the cell next to Patrick, not any of these men.

"Why don't you and your friends stand here quietly and listen to what Patrick has to say for himself. Maybe it will give you a story to drink on when he's finished."

"What's he training you for?" one of the man's friends asked.

"Boxing," Patrick proudly announced. "That's Rock Quarry Callaghan you're talking to."

"Shoot," the man said with a grin. "I saw you fight Angry Grady. Carl, why don't we let the man alone and listen to what the old one has to say?"

His other friends seemed to agree with the sentiment, and Carl

grudgingly gave way. "All right, I'm not picking a fight here. I just want to hear what the murderer has to say."

"I ain't no murderer," Patrick sputtered.

Corey attempted to calm him. "He didn't mean nothing by it. You've been arrested. Just about everyone thinks that means you did it. Just tell me what happened."

"Well, I don't rightly know," the old man admitted.

"Patrick!"

"I came around the back of the Silver Lady still mad as hell but needing to use the outhouse. I saw two gents in the darkness ahead of me. One was lying on the ground. The other was leaning over him. I gave a shout and went over to help."

"Sure you did," Carl was too drunk to keep his comments to himself.

Corey wanted to ask Patrick why he was angry, but the men at his back made him uneasy. Instead he asked, "So what did you do then?"

"I ran over. One of the men ran away as I approached, dropping money all about him. I'd have given chase, but there was the other man lying on the ground with a knife in his back."

"So what did you do?"

"Why, I rolled him over to see if he was still breathing, and wouldn't you know, it was that no good cardsharp, Bob Tanner."

"Who you just murdered!" Carl reminded everyone.

"I did not!" Patrick protested.

"Yes, you did," Carl insisted. "They found him with your knife in his back, and his blood on your hands."

"It wasn't my knife!"

"And you'd accused him of cheating at cards not an hour before, and his boy threw you out in the street," Carl continued.

"He was cheating!"

"My point exactly," Carl finished, as if Patrick had just confessed to everything.

Corey gritted his teeth to contain his irritation. "Did anyone else see what happened?"

"Just the man I scared away."

**A**t the boarding house where the boxer and his trainer were staying, Corey found Miss Pandora Parson sitting in the kitchen waiting up for him. To all appearances she was a proper young woman: well dressed, with brilliant red hair pulled back from the smattering of freckles on her face and her mother's silver wedding ring on the fourth finger of her right hand. In Miss Parson's case,

Corey had learned that appearances could be deceiving. He and Patrick had met her in Denver, where she was making her living as a professional gambler and trying to extricate herself from the hold of a less honorable man who was also causing trouble for Corey and Patrick. She chose to travel north with the two men when the opportunity presented itself. In the weeks since leaving Denver, Corey and Miss Parson had developed an easy, if formal, friendship, much to Patrick's chagrin.

Corey sat down at the table across from Miss Parson. "Have you heard about Patrick?"

"Oh yes," she confirmed. "I was back here at the house when Mr. Rett and Mr. Brown came to find you. They shared the news. Mrs. Shaw is not happy and is threatening to throw you out in the morning, and maybe me too. You know how she feels about boxers and gamblers."

Corey did know. Clutching her worn Bible tightly in her hand, the widow Shaw had been quite clear from the moment she met them that she had no use for people of their sort. But she did, it turned out, have quite a use for the money they paid in room and board. Unless she had other patrons waiting to take their rooms, Corey felt quite certain she would content herself with bluster.

"Everyone thinks he did it," Corey complained.

Miss Parson considered her response before tendering a reply. "Are you quite certain he did not?"

Corey lurched to his feet. The motion of standing shoved the chair back behind him. "Just what do you mean by that?"

Miss Parson watched Corey carefully as she answered him. "I'm not accusing Mr. O'Sullivan of murder. I am simply asking if you have any evidence other than your knowledge of Mr. O'Sullivan's character as to whether or not he committed this crime."

"Well, no," Corey admitted. "I wasn't there. I only know what Patrick told me."

"That's more than I know. Why don't you sit down and tell me what Mr. O'Sullivan related? I'm quite surprised the marshal let him talk to you at this hour of the night."

Corey straightened his chair and sat back down across from Miss Parson. "The marshal wouldn't let me in so I walked around back and talked to Patrick through the window."

Miss Parson furrowed her brow in what might be concern or disapproval. "The window of the cell looks out on the back of the jail?"

"Yes."

She shook her head.

"What's wrong?"



"Hopefully nothing. I just wouldn't have thought the marshal would put a man accused of murder where the public can get at him."

Corey clearly failed to grasp her point. "I guess we were lucky he didn't think of that. Otherwise, I couldn't have talked to him."

Miss Parson did not press the issue. "And just what did Mr. O'Sullivan have to say?"

"Why, that he didn't do it, of course," Corey answered, feeling his Irish temper stoking higher again.

Miss Parson's lips twitched upward as if she were trying not quite successfully to restrain a smile. "I'm sure he did, but what did he say happened?"

Suddenly Corey smiled himself. It wasn't that he saw any humor in Patrick's situation, but here he was blundering around like an amateur getting ready to fight a friend. He felt out of control—defeated before he had begun. Words would never be his chosen weapons. "I don't really know. Patrick says he frightened away the real murderer and was blindsided with the blame."

"And the money?" Miss Parson pressed. "Mr. Tanner was winning a lot of money this evening."

Corey scratched his head. "Patrick said there was a lot of money scattered all over the place."

"I see. Do you know if any money was found on Mr. O'Sullivan?"

"He didn't say, but you know as well as I do that it's unusual for Patrick to quit for the night when there's more than a few cents in his pocket."

"It is unusual," Miss Parson agreed. "I wonder if that knowledge will help Mr. O'Sullivan. I suppose that will depend on whether or not the marshal's reputation truly describes him."

"Good man?" Corey asked. He hadn't had any trouble with the law in Cheyenne and so hadn't paid much attention to it.

"Unfortunately not." Miss Parson slid her chair back from the table and rose to her feet. "I suggest that we retire to our rooms. There's really nothing we can do before we speak with the marshal in the morning."

"We?"

"Mr. Callaghan, you are an exceptionally good boxer. I would depend on your skills in a fight under almost any circumstance. But do you really think you can get more from the marshal than I can? He doesn't even have to be polite to you."

Corey had nothing to say to that. She might even be correct. He was an Irish boxer, and whatever else Miss Parson was, she was still a well-dressed woman in the West. Decision made, Corey pushed

himself to his feet. "I guess the only thing I can say is thank you. This isn't your trouble, and I can use all the help I can get."

"Until the morning, then, Mr. Callaghan."

The marshal was a burly man, heavy without being fat. He had a coarse growth of beard, and his clothes were in need of washing. He had not a use in the world for Corey Callaghan—had not even shaken the boxer's hand—but as Miss Parson had guessed, he was all politeness and deference to the young woman accompanying him. He even went so far as to invite her back to his office. Corey followed them and quietly positioned himself against the wall. The marshal sat behind a too small desk.

"Now then, what can I do for you, little lady?"

Miss Parson batted her eyes and smiled shyly at the marshal. Corey figured she knew the marshal knew exactly why they were there, but he held himself back from interrupting and let them play their game.

"It's all rather embarrassing," Miss Parson confided, "but I've heard that you are holding Mr. Patrick O'Sullivan in one of your cells."

The marshal leaned back in his chair. "That's true, little lady. Do you mind if I ask why you're interested?" His eyes strayed to Corey, hardened, then drifted back to Miss Parson, where they seemed to soften again.

"Why Mr. O'Sullivan is like a second father to me."

If Corey had been drinking he'd have spit out the liquid in surprise. While Miss Parson was always the model of schoolgirl etiquette, Patrick was usually boisterously rude. He was afraid that somehow Miss Parson's interest would shorten Corey's time in the ring. Now she said she liked the old man?

If the marshal noticed Corey's surprise he gave no sign of it. "I see. Then it's my sad duty to tell you," not that he looked at all sad about it, "that your second father is a murderer. He was caught sticking a knife into Bob Tanner."

Miss Parson already knew this, of course. "Knowing Mr. O'Sullivan as I do, I'm sure you can understand how much that surprises me. Could you tell me how this was discovered?"

The marshal considered this request, clearly weighing his conflicting responsibilities to be polite to a lady and the need for a gentleman to shield a young woman from unladylike business.

"Well, I don't see that this is a fit topic of conversation for a young woman, so let's simply say that two patrons of a nearby establishment found O'Sullivan stabbing Tanner."

"They actually saw him stab Mr. Tanner?"

The marshal shrugged. "Close enough not to matter. Tanner's blood was all over O'Sullivan."

"But why do you think Mr. O'Sullivan would do such a thing?"

"Can't say for sure. Probably greed or revenge. Tanner had won a lot of money at cards that night." He stopped talking long enough to eye Miss Parson speculatively. "And his man had embarrassed O'Sullivan, tossing him out in the street after he accused Tanner of cheating. I expect O'Sullivan figured he was due some payback."

Miss Parson closed her eyes for a moment, then opened them and rose to her feet. "Thank you ever so much for your time, Marshal."

Corey straightened up in surprise. The questioning was done? Why, she hadn't begun to ask the questions Corey wanted answered. "Wait a minute—"

"Mr. Callaghan," Miss Parson interrupted him. "Would you come with me please? We are going to have to find Mr. O'Sullivan a lawyer."

"Oh, I wouldn't waste your money on that," the marshal suggested.

Corey and Miss Parson turned back to look at him.

"Mr. O'Sullivan will likely never face a jury."

"I don't understand," Miss Parson said. "I thought you said you believe Mr. O'Sullivan is guilty."

"—Oh, he's guilty all right, but I'd be surprised if this case gets before a judge."

"But why?" It was Corey who asked this time. He was simply too puzzled to keep his mouth shut.

"Why, because Bob Tanner's son and the rest of his hands aren't that far from here. Tanner had come ahead into town. His son will be along soon driving the cattle to the railroad. Probably would have arrived tomorrow or the next day, but when they get word of this, they'll come all the faster. They'll want to make sure personally that Bob Tanner's murderer doesn't escape the hangman."

"And you're just going to let them lynch him?" Corey asked, blood rising in his face.

"O'Sullivan is guilty," the marshal noted. "I don't see any reason to stick my neck out for him."

Corey took a step forward, but Miss Parson took firm hold of his arm. "Mr. Callaghan, I really need you to come with me now."

Corey didn't move. His eyes were locked on the marshal's, who was slowly losing his grin and growing angry at the implied challenge. "Patrick didn't murder that man!" Corey insisted.

"Mr. Callaghan," Miss Parson's voice was urgent now. "Please come with me!"

The door to the office opened, and a deputy stuck his head into the room. "You all right, Marshal?"

Corey looked away from the marshal and started past the deputy. "Patrick didn't kill anyone," he said again.

"It don't matter," the marshal called after him. "The dumb mick will hang for it just the same."

"Mr. Callaghan," Miss Parson began in low urgent tones as they walked briskly away from the jail. "If we are going to help Mr. O'Sullivan you are going to have to control your temper."

"But Patrick didn't kill him!"

"I believe you. What you have to believe now is that the marshal doesn't care. He has arrested a man that everyone is willing to believe killed Mr. Tanner. Better yet, Mr. O'Sullivan is a stranger with no ties to the community. No one in Cheyenne will care when he's dead."

"I'll care!"

Miss Parson stopped walking and turned to face Corey, who took another step forward before he realized what she had done. He stopped and turned in her direction.

"Mr. Callaghan, you're angry. I understand. The marshal has just told us he doesn't care if Mr. O'Sullivan is murdered and you want to hit someone. I really do understand. But you, in turn, had better understand this. Mr. O'Sullivan's only chance to survive this comes from you and me. The deck is stacked against him, and he needs us to help him draw a winning hand. We can't do that very well if you can't control your temper. We can't do that at all if you hit someone and wind up in jail."

Corey took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "All right, I agree. It's like Patrick always said: Use my anger, don't let it use me. Still, it's an awful shame that this marshal hates the Irish so much he won't even try to find the murderer."

"Oh, I don't think it's that, or at least it's more complicated than you're making it sound. After all, Mr. O'Sullivan does fit the crime. He had an argument with Mr. Tanner that got him thrown out of the saloon. What's more, he was found leaning over the body not an hour later. Sure there are facts that don't fit, but the basic story does make Mr. O'Sullivan look guilty."

"Then you have to consider the marshal's other principal choices for the crime: Ross Clay, Jake Farley, and Harold Peters. Mr. Farley and Mr. Peters are both ranchers like Mr. Tanner, with big enough spreads to have a lot of respect. Mr. Clay runs a dry goods store. He's also a well-respected man. No marshal is going to want to aggravate these men by poking his nose into their business when

he's got a nobody stranger already fit for the crime."

"So Patrick hangs so the marshal doesn't have to offend his respectable citizens?"

"Not if we have anything to say about it, Mr. Callaghan."

"Miss Parson."

Ross Clay walked around the counter, wiping his hands on a dirty apron. "What a pleasure it is to see you again. Things went to hell—" He cut himself off and tried again. "It's a shame you had

**I wish I had stayed longer myself, but lady luck had left me."**

to leave early last night. Men behave themselves better when there's a lady present."

"Why, thank you, Mr. Clay. I wish I had stayed longer myself, but lady luck had left me, and you know we womenfolk like to travel in groups."

Clay chuckled a little too eagerly. His eyes shifted to Corey, who was standing behind Miss Parson, looking at her with mild surprise. It had not occurred to Corey that Miss Parson might have been in the same game as Patrick. It had been his impression that the two rarely played together.

"This is Mr. Callaghan, a friend of Patrick O'Sullivan."

Clay had begun to stick his hand out to shake Corey's, but he hesitated when he heard Patrick's name. Corey stepped around Miss Parson and grasped Clay's hand. "A pleasure to meet you, sir. We were hoping you could tell us what happened last night."

Clay looked far less happy now than he had a moment ago. He glanced around the shop at the other customers as if looking for an excuse to refuse. Miss Parson stepped forward and placed a hand on Clay's arm. "If it wouldn't be too inconvenient, Mr. Clay, I would be ever so grateful if you'd tell us what happened after I left the game."

Clay flushed, then glanced nervously at Corey. "Why, it wouldn't be inconvenient at all." He looked around again. "Why don't we go into the back room? My boy can help these other people."

He led the way and waited while they arranged themselves around a small table. "I really don't know what I can tell you," Clay began. "I'd never played with any of you before, so I don't really know the people involved."

"That's all right, Mr. Clay, if you could just tell us what you saw happen."

"Well, I was playing pretty good, if you'll remember. Not winning a lot like Farley and Tanner, but not losing like Peters, O'Sullivan, and . . ."

"It's all right, Mr. Clay," Miss Parson assured him. "You can say it. I won't be offended."

Clay wet his lips with his tongue. "And you, Miss Parson."

Miss Parson smiled. "It's why I left the game, Mr. Clay. Sometimes when the luck turns against you all you can do is fold and leave."

"Well, it's a shame Mr. O'Sullivan doesn't have your sense." Again he glanced nervously at Corey. "The more he lost the angrier it made him. Time and again he'd look disbelieving from his cards to the winning hand. When Bob Tanner finally cleaned him out O'Sullivan completely lost his temper. He leapt up from the table and accused Tanner of cheating."

"Could he have—" Corey stopped speaking when Miss Parson kicked him in the leg.

"Oh, I don't think so," Clay continued. "Some gents are just lucky."

"So what happened when Mr. O'Sullivan made his accusation?" Miss Parson asked.

"Well, he was hopping mad; and Tanner was laughing at him, and O'Sullivan wanted to take it outside and settle it with their fists."

"And Mr. Tanner did not agree?"

"No, he just kept laughing and calling O'Sullivan an old fool. He wouldn't even stand up to face him. He didn't have to, I guess. When O'Sullivan tried to make him stand, Tanner's man, Dunn, cracked him on the back of the head with a half empty bottle of whiskey. O'Sullivan dropped to his knees. He's a tough old coot. He never did lose consciousness. But while he was stunned and wondering what had happened to him, Dunn dragged him to the front door and kicked him out into the street."

Clay paused as if that was the end of the story, so Miss Parson leaned forward and touched his hand. "And what happened next, Mr. Clay?"

"Well, we went back to playing cards. Tanner still had the luck, but mine had turned sour. I started losing pretty fast." He smiled sheepishly. "I probably would have gotten cleaned out myself if Tanner hadn't excused himself to make water, and O'Sullivan got his knife into him."

Corey was having a hard time keeping silent through Clay's story, and this last comment was just too much for him. "Patrick didn't—"

He cut off sharply when Miss Parson kicked him again.

"And was Mr. Tanner the only big winner?" she asked.

Clay pulled his attention back to Miss Parson. "Tanner and Farley were both doing well, but Tanner was clearly doing better."



"And how much money do you think he had won?"

"Well now." Clay had to think about that for a few moments. "I'm not sure I know precisely what Tanner won, but he and Farley between them must have brought in five hundred dollars."

"And Mr. Tanner was doing better than Mr. Farley. He would have been carrying most of the money."

Clay thought about that for a moment as well. "Yes, he was."

"Add the winnings to Mr. Tanner's stake and how much do you think he was carrying when he left the game?"

"Hmm, I don't know if I ever knew the size of his stake, but Tanner had to be carrying four or maybe five hundred dollars."

"None of it left at the table?"

Clay shook his head. "Absolutely not. Tanner grinned when he was picking up his cash and said 'Not that I don't trust you boys, but I like to keep my money close to me.'"

"And no one followed Mr. Tanner out of the saloon?"

Clay shook his head. "Not that I noticed. Of course, none of us were really looking out for Tanner. We were talking at our table and drinking our whiskey."

"Yes, of course." Miss Parson reached across the table and patted Clay's hand. "I didn't mean to imply you should have been looking out for him. But what I can't understand, and it's the reason I asked the question, is why didn't Mr. Tanner's hand go out back with him? I thought that that was why Mr. Tanner brought him—to protect his money."

Clay's eyes widened with surprise. "Why, don't you know? Dunn wasn't with Tanner anymore by then. They had a big fight after he threw out O'Sullivan."

"A fight?"

"Yes, of course, Dunn wanted Tanner to replace the broken bottle of whiskey, and Tanner just laughed at him. When Dunn got mad, Tanner fired him. Said he wouldn't take sass from a man that worked for him."

**"S**o did Dunn do it?" Corey asked.

"We don't know that yet, but it's a possibility we must explore," Miss Parson said.

"But if he did it, then Patrick's free!"

"Only if we can prove that Dunn, and not Patrick, is guilty, and only if we can do it before Bob Tanner's son arrives."

"How do we do that?" Corey asked. They were walking down the side of the dusty main street. The sun was high overhead and very hot as the day slipped past morning into afternoon.

"I don't know," Miss Parson conceded. "We need to know more, and I'm just not certain who to ask for the information."

They walked on in silence for a few moments before Corey changed the direction of their conversation. "Why didn't you want to ask Clay if Tanner was cheating?"

Miss Parson sighed. "Because I already knew the answer and it doesn't help us."

"Well, if he was cheating . . ."

"What?" Miss Parson asked. "If he was cheating it justifies murder? Remember, our position is that Mr. O'Sullivan did not kill Mr. Tanner. Uncovering justifications for murder will only help the marshal hang him."

Corey walked back through her logic. "So you're saying if Tanner was cheating it makes Patrick look like a murderer?"

"No, Mr. Callaghan, I'm saying that whether or not Mr. Tanner was cheating is irrelevant to Mr. O'Sullivan. We need to figure out who did kill Mr. Tanner, and it doesn't help us that Mr. Clay didn't see anyone leave the saloon after Tanner did."

"So what's next?" Corey asked again. "We talk to Farley or Peters?"

"No, I don't think so. Mr. Farley and Mr. Peters are much more clever than Mr. Clay, and they were far less impressed with me. I don't think we want to talk to either of them yet."

"Then what do we do?"

"Why was Mr. Tanner killed, Mr. Callaghan?"

"We don't know yet, do we?"

"No," Miss Parson agreed, "but we can surmise. The marshal believes that Patrick stabbed him out of a thirst for vengeance and a sense of greed. Both of those are good motivations. And both could equally apply to Mr. Dunn." She considered for a few moments, then decided on a plan. "I want you to ask around the saloons. Find out if Mr. Tanner had enemies, and find out what happened to Mr. Dunn."

Corey agreed. "What will you be doing?"

"I'm going to try and talk to the marshal again. There are two separate ways to attack this problem, and if he's willing, the marshal could help me with both of them."

"Do you think he'll be willing?" Corey asked, trying to puzzle out what Miss Parson was thinking.

"It can't hurt to ask."

Corey found Miss Parson at the Silver Lady around dinner-time—visiting the scene of the crime. They had intended to meet at Mrs. Shaw's after their errands, as the evening meal was part of

the board they both paid, but one of the other tenants had passed on a message asking Corey to meet Miss Parson here instead. He found her sitting quietly at one of the small tables.

"Mr. Callaghan," she smiled faintly when she caught sight of him. She looked tired and worried, not at all her usual evening self.

"Miss Parson," he greeted her as he pulled out a chair to claim a seat.

"I'm sorry not to have waited for you at the boarding house, but I'm afraid that Mrs. Shaw was irritating me. The other guests really weren't much better. They are all so curious about Mr. O'Sullivan, and they were making it impossible for me to think."

"And did you learn anything?" Corey asked.

"Yes," Miss Parson replied, "but I haven't yet decided how to use the information."

Corey nodded, waiting for Miss Parson to share more with him, but the waitress Patrick liked to flirt with appeared at their table, and he paused to order their dinner. When she left, he returned his attention to Miss Parson, but she asked him her question first.

"What did you learn?"

Corey frowned. He had passed through a lot of saloons this afternoon and was feeling a few of his beers. Not that he was drunk, for he wasn't, but he had been forced to have a draft in every establishment he visited. He thought back through the many conversations before forcing himself to concede defeat. "Not much," he admitted.

"Oh, come now, Mr. Callaghan, surely you learned something. Is Mr. Dunn still in Cheyenne?"

Corey brightened. "No. I can be pretty certain about that. Several men I talked to knew who he was, and nobody had seen him. They had looked for him too. With Tanner being murdered, people were curious as to Dunn's take on the killing."

"And where do they think he has gone?"

Corey lost his smile. "That's not so good. Just about everybody thinks he rode back down the trail to find Tanner's son. John Tanner is herding the BT cattle to the rail station here in Cheyenne, but everyone figures he'll leave the herd with a couple of men and ride ahead to settle things."

Miss Parson drooped a little in her chair. "I suppose that's better than him riding off for parts unknown, but it makes it hard for us here. Did they have any idea when John Tanner might get here?"

Corey shrugged. "Tomorrow morning? No one knows for certain."

"Then we have one more night to figure out what to do." She

sighed and Corey was struck again by how tired she looked, as if Patrick's fate rested on her shoulders alone. Then Corey realized that was true. They both knew he was never going to clear Patrick of murder. If the old man had a chance, it was Miss Parson who would find it.

"How did things go with the marshal?" Corey asked.

Miss Parson brightened slightly, trying to smile. "The marshal wasn't there. It seems he's left town on business. But Deputy Poole was surprisingly helpful."

"Deputy Poole?"

"The big burly man who came to the marshal's defense when you started shouting in his office this morning."

Corey's eyebrows shot toward the roof. "That man? He's the one who wouldn't let me speak to Patrick last night. It's hard to believe that he was helpful."

Miss Parson found her smile. "Oh, he's really quite nice. He answered all of my questions and even showed me the evidence against Mr. O'Sullivan."

"Nice?" Corey was astounded. Then his mind registered the rest of Miss Parson's statement. "Evidence? How can there be any evidence? Patrick didn't kill the man."

Miss Parson's smile broadened and the signs of fatigue began to fade. "Actually, the evidence tends to help Mr. O'Sullivan. I'm not sure Mr. Poole fully realizes that. Information like this is a sort of trump card, and we'll have to be careful how we play it."

Corey tried his best to forget about Deputy Poole and to concentrate on what Miss Parson was saying. He shook his head in frustration. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm just a stupid man, but I really don't understand what you're saying."

"You're not stupid, Mr. Callaghan," Miss Parson quietly reassured him. "We're both out of our depth here. I'm just saying that I have some pretty good cards up my sleeve now. They aren't great cards—they aren't kings or aces—but they're good cards if we find the right time to play them."

"Fair enough," Corey agreed, "but would it help if you showed me the cards or would I simply get in the way?"

"You're never in the way, Mr. Callaghan, but with your temper, I'm not certain how much I want to expose our hand. You already know the basic facts. Patrick doesn't carry a knife, and there was less than a dollar found in his pockets."

Corey straightened, feeling triumphant at the confirmation that Patrick's pockets had been empty. His voice rose with his body. "Then Patrick didn't steal anything! He is innocent!"

"Quietly, Mr. Callaghan," Miss Parson admonished him.

Corey slouched back over. "Then we can prove his innocence," he repeated more quietly.

"With the right jury I think a good defense attorney can keep Mr. O'Sullivan from hanging. But as to proving his innocence? That is possible, but by itself, I think it is unlikely."

The news deflated Corey's sudden burst of enthusiasm. "That's better than nothing, I guess."

**A**fter dinner they talked about what Corey had learned about Bob Tanner.

"He's really not from around here. He's got a ranch way out near Lamar and drives his cattle down here once a year because the prices are better near the railroad. Not many people seem to know him. The few who did called him 'hard' and 'shrewd.' They respect him, I guess, but I don't think they like him."

Pandora nodded. "That might be helpful. If the people of Cheyenne are more interested in the murder than angry about it, then they might be willing to give Mr. O'Sullivan a fair trial."

There it was again—the trial. Somewhere during the afternoon, Miss Parson had stopped thinking about a way to free Patrick immediately and started thinking about a trial he might never have. "Miss Parson, I appreciate everything you've done for Patrick, but I keep thinking about what the marshal said. There won't be a trial because Tanner's men will lynch him. What are we going to do about that?"

Miss Parson's shoulders slumped in defeat. "I don't know. I've learned a lot that casts doubt on the guilt of Mr. O'Sullivan, but nothing that proves his innocence. I need something more if we're to convince young Mr. Tanner, but I just don't know what that is."

"So we need more time." Corey thought about that for a moment, but however he looked at it, time was the one thing they didn't have. "Well, I'm no good at figuring out who killed who," he admitted, "so I'll stick to the part of this I am good at and go camp out beneath Patrick's window in case Tanner's men get here even earlier than expected."

Miss Parson looked concerned. "Mr. Callaghan, what can you truly do? These men will be armed, and you don't carry a weapon."

Corey shrugged. "I prefer to work with my hands."

The distress rose in Miss Parson's voice. "They will shoot you."

"I'm betting they won't want to commit murder."

"Then what do you think they're riding to the jail to do?"

"That's different. They think Patrick stabbed Bob Tanner in the back. A lynch mob thinks they're making justice, not murder."

"That makes no sense at all."

Corey sighed. "All right, then think it through with me. Let's assume I can get my hands on a weapon and wait for Tanner with it. I'd have to use a shotgun because I'm a terrible shot, and I'm not going to hit anything with a pistol or a rifle. Now picture Tanner's men arriving. I'll be shooting at them while they are shooting at me. Who do you think will win: all of those rifles or my double-barreled shotgun?"

"I see . . ." Miss Parson reluctantly conceded.

"Most men don't like the idea of shooting an unarmed man. If I take a gun, Patrick will have no chance. If not . . ."

"I've grown quite fond of you, Corey," Miss Parson quietly acknowledged. "I'd hate to lose you and Mr. O'Sullivan both in the same night."

Corey walked around the table and kissed Pandora lightly on top of the head. "I'm very fond of you, too, but I can't abandon Patrick."

"No," she agreed. "We can't."

Corey awoke to the sound of running horses. He had dozed off sitting uncomfortably against the back wall of the jail. Now he shoved himself to his feet and tried to shake the cobwebs from his head.

"Do you hear that, Corey, me lad?" Patrick's voice was a frightened whisper.

"I hear it, Patrick," Corey assured his trainer. "I'm here. I'm not going to let anything happen to you."

"They'll have guns."

"I know. What I want you to do is sit down with your back against the outer wall and pull that straw pallet over top of you for protection."

"What if the deputy lets them in?" The fear in Patrick's voice was edging toward panic.

"Then I'll charge around this jail fast as I can and knock the devils flat," Corey promised. "But I don't think the deputy will let them inside to get at you. If he wanted to do that, he wouldn't be sleeping at the jail tonight."

As if to confirm Corey's words, a rifle shot sounded from within the jail, followed quickly by a bellowed warning. "I'll only say this once! Go away! If you try to break into this jail I'll start shooting the lot of you!"

"I want O'Sullivan!" A voice hollered back.

"And I'm telling you, you can't have him! Let the judge hang him! There'll be no lynching here tonight!"

"You're only one man!" The voice shouted back. "We'll get him!"



The sound of running horses resumed. Within moments riders were spilling around the side of the building to face the back of the jail."

"Get down, Patrick," Corey hissed. He heard Patrick scrambling across the floor to take cover against the wall. He had not dragged the pallet after him.

Three riders pointed rifles at Corey, while more continued to join them from the front of the building.

"I'm unarmed," Corey shouted, holding up his hands so they could see he spoke the truth.

"Move away from there, mister," one of the men ordered.

"I can't do that, Mr. Tanner," Corey protested.

"I'm John Tanner," a final man announced, emerging only now around the side of the building.

Corey half turned to face him while still trying to hold the other riders in his view. "I'm sorry for your loss, Mr. Tanner, but I can't let you murder Patrick O'Sullivan."

"It's not your decision," Tanner observed. "And just who are you anyway?"

"Corey Callaghan, sir, and it is my decision. I won't let you commit murder tonight."

"Just shoot the fool and get it over with," one of the riders suggested. He lifted his rifle and aimed it at Corey.

"Wait!" Tanner's voice was firm and the man hesitated. "What about it, Mr. Callaghan? What's to prevent us from simply shooting you and then executing the old mick? What's your stake in this?"

Corey slowly lowered his hands. "Now that's the problem, isn't it? You see killing Patrick O'Sullivan as an execution. I see it as murder. That's because you believe he killed your father, and I know he didn't."

Tanner bristled. "How do you know he didn't?"

Corey shook his head. "I'm sorry, sir. I'm not good with words. If you'll wait until Miss Parson can be brought here, then I'm sure that she'll convince you, but—"

"Wait while you send for a woman?" It was the man who had started to shoot Corey who interrupted them. "He's just trying to stall until someone brings more law. Let's shoot him and be done with it."

"No!" Tanner commanded, then turned his attention back to Corey. "Dunn's right. I can't wait. Back away now or I'll let him shoot you."

Corey swallowed hard at the lump in his throat. He hoped his voice was steady and did not show his fear. "No, Mr. Tanner, you won't." He prayed to Jesus, Mary, and Joseph that he was correct. "You can execute a murderer, but you won't become one."

Tanner stared at him hard out of the darkness. A half moon was in the sky and little pools of light spilled out of the back windows of the jail, but it was unlikely that Tanner could actually see Corey well enough to study his resolve. He spit. "Damn it, you boys go pull that man out of there."

Dunn lifted his rifle again.

"I said pull him!" Tanner snapped. "Put your guns down and go pull him away from that window."

Three of the men holstered their rifles and got down from their horses.

"Callaghan!" a voice whispered urgently from inside the jail.

"It's the deputy," Patrick whispered.

"Callaghan, how many men are there?"

"I count seven," Corey told him.

"I think there are more in front," the deputy reported.

"Move Patrick," Corey urged. "Make them break into the jail to get at him."

"You might as well get out of the way," one of the dismounted riders suggested. "Otherwise, you're just going to get hurt."

Corey stopped whispering to the deputy and took a step forward. "You'll have to go through me to get him."

The distinctive sound of shutters being opened rolled down the street toward the jail. The riders glanced around them, probably wondering, as Corey was, just how many people were now witnessing this confrontation.

"Get on with it!" Tanner ordered, and the first rider stepped in to meet Corey's fist.

The man never saw it coming. He stepped forward into a swinging chunk of granite and quickly stumbled back in the opposite direction before falling flat in the dirt. Corey darted forward and delivered a short powerful blow to the next man's midriff, taking advantage of his opponents' sudden surprise. Three men expected to handle one without difficulty. Corey took advantage of their overconfidence to quickly even the odds.

He followed the blow to the midriff with an uppercut to the chin, then spun around to deliver a roundhouse blow to the third man's temple. In just a few moments, all three men were on the ground. They weren't out for the count, but they were stunned and hurting. Corey backed up until he was standing in front of the window again.

Tanner spit again. "What did you say your name was?"

Patrick could not contain his pride—not even to save his own life. "That's Rock Quarry Callaghan!" he boasted.

"Patrick, shut up!" Corey's voice was sharp and angry, but the warning came too late.

Tanner cursed. "So you fooled me, Mr. Callaghan. You're right, I won't murder an unarmed man, but neither will I let a professional fighter stop me from avenging my father." He looked around, considering. "Boys, use the butts of your rifles and convince Mr. Callaghan to step aside."

"Saints preserve us," Patrick swore.

"Deputy Poole," Corey whispered, "you'd better move Patrick now!"

Two more riders dismounted, leaving only Tanner and Dunn in the saddle. They reversed their grips on their rifles and walked forward to join the three men picking themselves up off the ground. "Mister," the first man Corey had hurt announced. "You just made a mighty big mistake!"

He started toward Corey but stopped when he realized his friends weren't following him. Corey folded his right fist into his left hand and smiled at his attackers' confusion. He figured any delay ultimately helped him and Patrick. There were more signs of witnesses stirring along the street. Maybe some of them would decide to intervene.

"Get on with it!" Dunn hollered as the men stood in a rough circle and whispered back and forth.

"They're afraid of you, Corey, me lad," Patrick whispered in encouragement.

Unfortunately, his voice carried.

"I ain't afraid of no man!" the first rider declared.

Corey sighed. "Patrick, you're not helping." He stepped forward to meet the rider.

Dunn laughed.

The rider wound up for a punch, and Corey jabbed him twice in the chin. The blows didn't cause the man to step back, but they threw off his timing, making it easy for Corey to evade his wild swing and land a much more punishing blow just below his rib cage. Before he could hit the man again, one of the riflemen stepped in swinging his weapon down over his head like an axe. Corey stepped in close so that the force of the blow landed past his shoulder. He hammered three blows into the man's torso, then stepped back and landed a haymaker to the chin.

A man leapt onto Corey's back. He spun about and pawed at the man, only to get the butt of a rifle driven into his stomach. It was worse than your average punch, but he'd taken harder blows in the ring. He tried to ignore the pain, stepping forward to throw a right to the rifleman's jaw, but the man on his back hampered him.

The rifleman hit Corey a second time while another man grabbed at Corey's right arm. The boxer spun about and drove his left fist into the latter man's shoulder, but there were too many of them surrounding him. A rifle butt cracked against Corey's ribs. The man on his back clawed at Corey's eyes. The first rifleman was back on his feet, swinging his weapon horizontally. Corey ducked low, and the rifle connected solidly with the face of the man on his back. Corey's rider went sprawling, but before the boxer could take advantage of his freedom the other rifleman drove his weapon hard into the side of Corey's head.

Another blow connected with his stomach, followed by a rifle butt driven hard against his back. The ground hit Corey in the face, and he struggled to get his hands and knees back under him. He wasn't fighting any longer. It was all that he could do not to let the men hammer him flat.

A female voice carried clearly across the street. It was a bit out of breath, but still strong enough to carry. "If you're quite finished having your ruffians beat an unarmed man, Mr. Tanner, perhaps you'd like to learn the identity of your father's murderer."

Silence smothered the street, and through rapidly swelling eyes Corey could see Miss Pandora Parson skirting the edge of the jail to stand between Patrick's window and the men surrounding Corey.

A curse broke the silence coming not from the confrontation at the jail, but from one of the spectators watching from a window across the street. "I see her," another voice retorted in disgust, and somewhere else a door creaked open. Up and down the street western men were preparing to do their duty to protect a western woman. The silent witnesses were preparing to become participants in the night's entertainment.

"You would be the Miss Parson the boxer mentioned?" Tanner asked.

"I would indeed," Miss Parson answered. Corey thought he heard a faint tremor in her voice, and through his pain he remembered that she did not think she had enough evidence to convince Tanner of Patrick's innocence. She would just be buying time as Corey had.

"If you'll spare me a few more minutes," Miss Parson continued, "I believe I can convince you that you are about to make a grave mistake this evening."

"The only mistake we've made," Tanner observed, "was in not shooting that fighter when he first stuck his nose into my business."

"Be that as it may," Miss Parson said, "you've now succeeded in attracting a lot of attention to your activities and as you've made

no attempt to hide your identities, it may behoove you to reconsider your position. Can it really hurt you to wait a few minutes longer to exact your revenge?"

Tanner sighed. "You might as well say your piece."

"Thank you. As you've no doubt learned by now, there was an altercation between your father and Mr. O'Sullivan in the Silver Lady yesterday evening."

"That no good cardsharp was cheating!" Patrick shouted.

Tanner's face snapped toward the cell window, and he edged his horse forward several paces. "My father never cheated at cards!"

"Mr. O'Sullivan, please!" Miss Parson pleaded.

"He was a no good, lying—"

"Patrick!" Corey shouted as loudly as his battered rib cage would permit him. "For the love of God, you listen to me! You sit down in that cell, and you listen to what Miss Parson has to say, and you shut your stupid mouth!"

"But Corey, me lad—"

"Not another word!" Corey insisted. "You open your mouth again and I swear I will never go back in the ring!"

Much to Corey's relief, Patrick responded with silence, too stunned for the moment to think of something to say.

Tanner, however, kept talking. "My father never cheated!"

Miss Parson tried to soothe him. "It doesn't matter if your father was good, lucky, or cheating last night. What does matter is that Mr. O'Sullivan thought that he was cheating and attempted to challenge your father to a fistfight."

"He didn't cheat," Tanner repeated.

"I am not saying that he did. I am explaining to you why Mr. O'Sullivan appears guilty."

"He appears guilty," Dunn observed, "because he murdered him."

"He had the motive to murder," Miss Parson agreed, allowing her attention to be drawn from Tanner to this man. "He believed he had been cheated, and he was humiliated when a hired hand broke a bottle over his head and threw him out into the street. What is more, Mr. O'Sullivan also had the opportunity to murder Mr. Tanner's father. As you no doubt know, he was found leaning over the body."

"And so he's guilty!" Dunn insisted.

"And so the marshal arrested him," Miss Parson corrected him, "even if the rest of the evidence is confusing."

"What evidence?" Tanner asked, refocusing the lady's attention on him. "I thought that was the whole case—O'Sullivan was caught bloody-handed with my father after the killing."

"Well, first there is the problem of the knife," Miss Parson stated.

"The knife?" Tanner repeated. "I don't understand."

"Deputy Poole?" Miss Parson called out. "Would you describe the knife used to murder Mr. Tanner's father, please?"

Poole's face appeared at a barred window next to Patrick's cell. His body blocked the light emanating from the building so his features were masked in shadow. "Knife's a bowie, miss." His voice boomed into the street. "It's a big blade, seen a lot of use."

"And did Mr. O'Sullivan have a knife sheath on his person?"

"No, miss," the deputy answered. "That's a might peculiar, but it don't really mean a thing."

"Not by itself," Miss Parson agreed.

"So he didn't have a sheath," Tanner said. "As the deputy said, that doesn't mean he didn't kill him."

A larger crowd was gathering now, composed of both men and women. Pandora projected her voice louder to make certain everyone could hear her. "The second problem with the evidence is the money. Deputy Poole, how much money was collected at the scene of the killing?"

The deputy had his answer ready. "One hundred twenty-seven dollars, strewn all around the body like it was dropped in a hurry."

"And how much was found on Mr. O'Sullivan?"

"Thirty-seven cents."

Someone in the growing crowd laughed.

"Would it surprise you to learn, Mr. Tanner, that your father won between four and five hundred dollars yesterday?"

"Four to five hundred?" Tanner asked. "How do you know that?"

"I've spoken with half of the gamblers. They all agree that your father left the table with much more than was found near his body. Isn't it peculiar that with at least three hundred dollars missing, not a single one made it into the pockets of the man accused of murdering him?"

The first hint of uncertainty touched Tanner's voice. "Yes."

"It's not so strange," Dunn objected. "There were a lot of people around your pa's body after the murder. If O'Sullivan dropped your pa's winnings, lots of people could have helped themselves to some of the cash."

"Dunn's right," Tanner said, sitting straighter in his saddle. "This doesn't mean that O'Sullivan is innocent."

"So you are Mr. Dunn," Miss Parson's voice brightened with the realization. "I didn't recognize your face in this darkness. I am so glad to learn you are here tonight." Her voice seemed to gain confidence as she was speaking. "And as for your point, Mr. Tanner, you are completely correct. It is entirely possible that Mr.



O'Sullivan owned a knife without a sheath. It is also possible that most of your father's winnings were stolen by the men who discovered him and Mr. O'Sullivan. No one before Mr. Dunn here has suggested that was the case, but it is still a possibility. But there is also another possibility. If Mr. O'Sullivan is innocent and his account of what happened behind the Silver Lady last night is correct, then there is another man who had both motive and opportunity to murder your father. Mr. O'Sullivan chased that man away, causing him to drop part of the money he was stealing and to leave his knife stuck in the back of his victim." She turned her attention fully on Dunn, but her voice still spoke to John Tanner. "If you could find another man who had both motive and opportunity, wouldn't you want to search him for an empty knife sheath and some three hundred dollars in cash? Wouldn't you want to be certain of your man?"

"Now wait a minute," Dunn said.

Tanner shook his head. "That won't do, Miss Parson. Dunn has worked for my father for eight years."

"And he was fired last night for insisting your father replace the bottle of whiskey Mr. Dunn broke on Mr. O'Sullivan's head."

"Dunn?"

The surprise in Tanner's voice unsettled the cowhand. "Now that ain't so, Mr. Tanner. I told you how it was. Your pa sent me back to his room to get a box of cigars. That's why I wasn't there when this happened."

"There were upwards of forty people in the Silver Lady that night, Mr. Tanner. Every one heard your father fire his man. Mr. Dunn had both motive and opportunity to kill him. Why don't you ask to see his knife?"

Dunn started backing his horse away. "O'Sullivan's the one who murdered him. Why else would the marshal arrest him?"

"Dunn!" The hand's retreat had transformed Tanner's doubt into suspicion. "I want to see your knife."

Dunn began to turn his horse away.

Tanner lifted his rifle. "Dunn!"

Dunn spun back, lifting his own rifle as he did, but Tanner fired first, throwing the hand from his saddle.

"Saints, preserve us," Patrick prayed.

**I**t took two more days for the marshal to release Patrick, even though both the money and the empty bowie sheath were found in Dunn's bedroll. Even then the marshal didn't look happy to be doing it.

"I want the three of you out of my town," he said.

"But I'm innocent!" Patrick complained.

Corey grabbed his trainer by the arm and began to pull him toward the door, but Patrick hadn't finished talking. "He's just afraid we'll help the deputy beat him in the next election."

"Shut up, Patrick," Corey admonished as he pulled the old man away from the row of cells and into the front of the building. He ground to a sudden halt when he saw Miss Parson standing a little closer to Deputy Poole than he thought was strictly necessary.

"If you hadn't stood up for the law," Miss Parson was saying, "I shudder to think what might have happened."

"Well now," Patrick wrenched his arm free of Corey's grasp and rubbed his hands together with glee. "Looks like Miss Parson has found herself a boyfriend. Maybe we're finished with that filly at last."

"That filly saved your life," Corey reminded him.

"Saints, preserve me! You think I don't know that? But now I've got to worry about your training. We've ribs to heal and bruises to fade and womenfolk just get in the way."

Miss Parson held out her hand to the deputy and said farewell. She moved to join Corey and Patrick. "Where are we headed, gentlemen?"

"We?" Patrick complained. "What about the deputy?"

Corey ignored Patrick's comment and spoke to Miss Parson. "It doesn't matter much, as long as we keep moving west. Patrick can pick up a fight for me pretty much anywhere."

"West it is, then," Miss Parson agreed.

"We'll take the rails toward San Francisco," Corey decided. "They've got big gambling houses there."

Miss Parson smiled. "Indeed they do, Mr. Callaghan. Thank you for thinking of me."

"Don't I have a say in this?" Patrick asked.

Corey continued to ignore him. "We probably won't get there all in one trip," he warned. "Not everyone," he paused to look meaningfully at Patrick, "can handle their cards as well as you do."

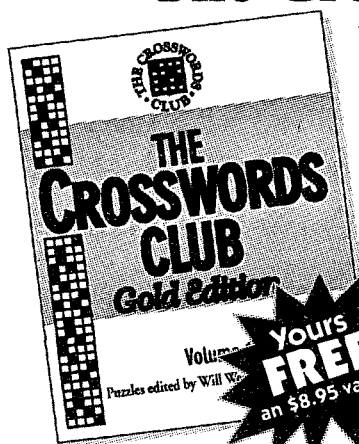
"What do you mean by that?" Patrick sputtered.

"By easy stages, then," Miss Parson agreed. Then she slipped her arm into Corey's, and they walked out into the street.

Patrick followed behind them, still complaining. ♣

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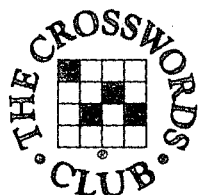
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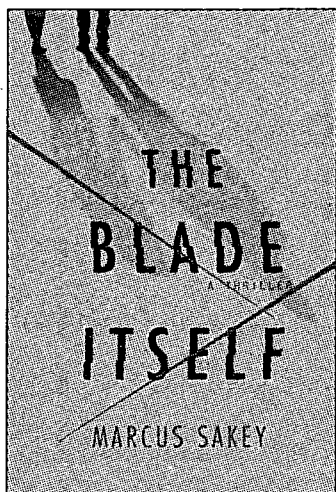
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# BOOKED & PRINTED

ROBERT C. HAHN

**I**t is always a pleasure to discover promising new authors. This month three highly polished first novels display a range of styles and subject matter.

Current fashion in thrillers leans toward terrorism and cataclysmic events that threaten cities, countries, or even the entire world. Marcus Sakey's universe in **THE BLADE ITSELF** (St. Martin's, \$22.95), in contrast, can be boiled down to a struggle between two men, childhood friends, seeking to impose their will on one another in a desperately escalating struggle.



The stakes are only relatively small. Evan McCann wants payback and a new stake to start living again after seven plus years in prison. Danny Carter has used that same length of time to build a straight career in construction, develop a solid relationship with a woman, and leave his old life in "the life" behind.

As childhood buddies growing up rough in Chicago, Evan and Danny progressed from pranks to auto theft and finally to a badly botched robbery that resulted in Danny's narrow escape and Evan's first serious sentence. Following their street code, Evan never implicated Danny.

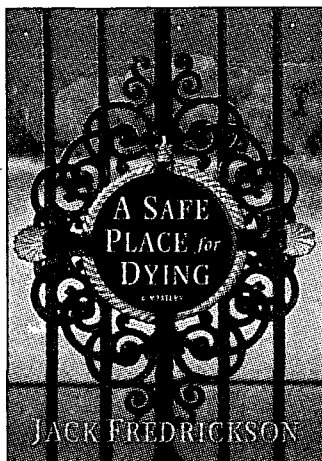
The seven years apart greatly changed the two friends. When he emerges from prison, Evan is hardened physically and emotionally into a brutal and ruthless schemer. Danny has become a man of possessions, position, and responsibilities—in other words a man who is vulnerable because he has much to lose.

The concept is clever, the execution enthralling as the two former friends jockey back and forth. Sakey manages the difficult task of staking out strong positions for both men: Evan tries to force Danny back to the life he once led while Danny tries to give Evan just enough to get him out of his life. Their struggle begins

like two dogs circling each other, trying to establish dominance without actually fighting, and grows into a desperate conflict that only one can survive.

Sakey has worked as a freelance advertising copywriter, but it is obvious after this debut that he has found a better calling as a novelist. *The Blade Itself* is not the first of a series, but readers who delve into its pages will undoubtedly want to see what Sakey creates as a follow-up.

Jack Fredrickson's debut novel also takes place in Chicago and also involves construction in a way, but the two novels are vastly different. In Fredrickson's *A SAFE PLACE FOR DYING* (St. Martin's, \$23.95) a failed private eye is pressured into service to prevent disaster in an ultra-safe gated community. Fredrickson's strong suit is humor, and in Vloddek Elstrom, better known as Dek, he has created a reluctant private eye who is engaging, sympathetic, and eventually effective.



Dek has gone from living in one of Chicago's oldest and most impressive gated communities, a development known as Crystal Waters (a k a Gateville), to being sole occupant of a weird structure resembling the turret of a castle that he is trying to restore. The reason for his dismissal from the opulence of Crystal Waters is his divorce from Amanda Phelps—she kept her wealth and house, and Dek kept little more than a jelly jar, a jeep, and a small savings account.

Dek is drawn back to Gateville after an explosion destroys one of Gateville's multimillion-dollar mansions and the community's residents receive an extortion letter. They fear that a police investigation of the matter will have an adverse affect on their property values.

Dek is willing to take the money and the job because Amanda's home is one of the houses that may be at risk, and he's still very much in love with her. The first explosion isn't the only one, and Dek soon finds himself in over his head, and as soon as the police and the A.T.F. get involved, as they inevitably do, he also finds himself a prime suspect. Before the case is over, Dek will get a chance to prove his mettle in ways that will astound him and perhaps win back the love of his life.

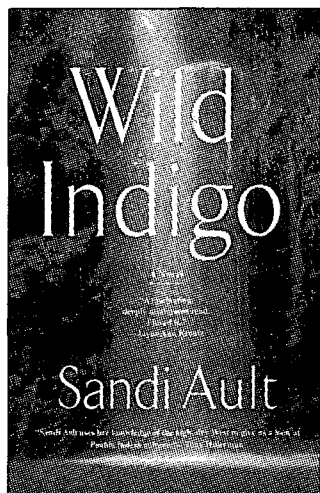
Fredrickson shows a deft hand at creating colorful characters,

such as “provenance specialist” Leo Brumsky, who earns four hundred thousand dollars a year but lives in the basement of his mother’s brick bungalow, and the building commissioner named Elvis, who is one of the many problems Dek has to contend with while trying to restore his home. Fredrickson maintains a snappy pace, delivers a very credible plot, and introduces readers to an amusing and highly promising new detective.

Our third debut, Sandi Ault’s *WILD INDIGO* (Berkley Prime Crime, \$23.95) is set not in the urban wilds of Chicago but rather in Colorado mountain country, and it features a heroine who will put readers in mind of Tony Hillerman’s Leaphorn and Chee as well as Nevada Barr’s Anna Pigeon. *Wild Indigo* introduces Jamaica Wild, and she has a unique and lovely voice all her own.

Jamaica Wild is a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) resource protection agent, and she is both a loner and a woman with an intense longing to belong. Strong yet vulnerable, she arouses powerful feelings—good and bad—in many of the people she deals with.

Jamaica’s status as an outsider is clear from the opening scene, when she watches helplessly as Pueblo dweller Jerome Santana is trampled to death by a herd of buffalo.



Despite her “adoption” by Momma Anna of the Tanoah Pueblo, who is teaching her some of the people’s ways, Jamaica remains an outsider to many members of the tribe. In fact, Jamaica’s closest relationship is not with a human at all, but rather with her wolf cub, Mountain, whose dependency on her creates a remarkable bond and some unusual problems.

She is stunned when accusations that her actions may have caused Santana’s death result in her suspension from the BLM. In order to absolve herself in the case of Santana’s death, Jamaica needs to locate a missing witness, a young pueblo boy. Jamaica has to figure out where he might have gone, and finding him will test her strength and will to the limits of endurance.

Ault’s fluid writing allows her to weave Native American lore, traditions, and mysticism into her narrative naturally and effectively. Jamaica Wild is a name that seems to conjure a free spirit, and in her debut she certainly lives up to that suggestion.



# THE KNIGHT'S CROSS SIGNAL PROBLEM

“**L**ouis,” exclaimed Mr. Carrados, with the air of genial gaiety that Carlyle had found so incongruous to his conception of a blind man, “you have a mystery somewhere about you! I know it by your step.”

Nearly a month had passed since the incident of the false Dionysius had led to the two men meeting. It was now December. Whatever Mr. Carlyle’s step might indicate to the inner eye it betokened to the casual observer the manner of a crisp, alert, self-possessed man of business. Carlyle, in truth, betrayed nothing of the pessimism and despondency that had marked him on the earlier occasion.

“You have only yourself to thank that it is a very poor one,” he retorted. “If you hadn’t held me to a hasty promise—”

“To give me an option on the next case that baffled you, no matter what it was—”

“Just so. The consequence is that you get a very unsatisfactory affair that has no special interest to an amateur and is only baffling because it is—well—”

“Well, baffling?”

“Exactly, Max. Your would-be jest has discovered the proverbial truth. I need hardly tell you that it is only the insoluble that is finally baffling and this is very probably insoluble. You remember the awful smash on the Central and Suburban at Knight’s Cross Station a few weeks ago?”

“Yes,” replied Carrados, with interest. “I read the whole ghastly details at the time.”

“You read?” exclaimed his friend suspiciously.

“I still use the familiar phrases,” explained Carrados, with a smile. “As a matter of fact, my secretary reads to me. I mark what I want to hear and when he comes at ten o’clock we clear off the morning papers in no time.”

“And how do you know what to mark?” demanded Mr. Carlyle cunningly.

Carrados's right hand, lying idly on the table, moved to a newspaper near. He ran his finger along a column heading, his eyes still turned towards his visitor.

"'The Money Market. Continued from page 2. British Railways,'" he announced.

"Extraordinary," murmured Carlyle.

"Not very," said Carrados. "If someone dipped a stick in treacle and wrote 'Rats' across a marble slab you would probably be able to distinguish what was there, blindfold."

"Probably," admitted Mr. Carlyle. "At all events we will not test the experiment."

"The difference to you of treacle on a marble background is scarcely greater than that of printers' ink on newspaper to me. But anything smaller than pica I do not read with comfort, and below long primer I cannot read at all. Hence the secretary. Now the accident, Louis."

"The accident: well, you remember all about that. An ordinary Central and Suburban passenger train, non-stop at Knight's Cross, ran past the signal and crashed into a crowded electric train that was just beginning to move out. It was like sending a garden roller down a row of handlights. Two carriages of the electric train were flattened out of existence; the next two were broken up. For the first time on an English railway there was a good stand-up smash between a heavy steam-engine and a train of light cars, and it was 'bad for the coo.'"

"Twenty-seven killed, forty something injured, eight died since," commented Carrados.

"That was bad for the Co.," said Carlyle. "Well, the main fact was plain enough. The heavy train was in the wrong. But was the engine-driver responsible? He claimed, and he claimed vehemently from the first, and he never varied one iota, that he had a 'clear' signal—that is to say, the green light, it being dark. The signalman concerned was equally dogged that he never pulled off the signal—that it was at 'danger' when the accident happened and that it had been for five minutes before. Obviously, they could not both be right."

"Why, Louis?" asked Mr. Carrados smoothly.

"The signal must either have been up or down—red or green."

"Did you ever notice the signals on the Great Northern Railway, Louis?"

"Not particularly. Why?"

"One winterly day, about the year when you and I were concerned in being born, the engine-driver of a Scotch express received the 'clear' from a signal near a little Huntingdon station

called Abbots Ripton. He went on and crashed into a goods train and into the thick of the smash a down express mowed its way. Thirteen killed and the usual tale of injured. He was positive that the signal gave him a 'clear'; the signalman was equally confident that he had never pulled it off the 'danger.' Both were right, and yet the signal was in working order. As I said, it was a winterly day; it had been snowing hard and the snow froze and accumulated on the upper edge of the signal arm until its weight bore it down. That is a fact that no fiction writer dare have invented, but to this day every signal on the Great Northern pivots from the centre of the arm instead of from the end, in memory of that snowstorm."

"That came out at the inquest, I presume?" said Mr. Carlyle. "We have had the Board of Trade inquiry and the inquest here and no explanation is forthcoming. Everything was in perfect order. It rests between the word of the signalman and the word of the engine-driver—not a jot of direct evidence either way. Which is right?"

"That is what you are going to find out, Louis?" suggested Carrados.

"It is what I am being paid for finding out," admitted Mr. Carlyle frankly. "But so far we are just where the inquest left it, and, between ourselves, I candidly can't see an inch in front of my face in the matter."

"Nor can I," said the blind man, with a rather wry smile. "Never mind. The engine-driver is your client, of course?"

"Yes," admitted Carlyle. "But how the deuce did you know?"

"Let us say that your sympathies are enlisted on his behalf. The jury were inclined to exonerate the signalman, weren't they? What has the company done with your man?"

"Both are suspended. Hutchins, the driver, hears that he may probably be given charge of a lavatory at one of the stations. He is a decent, bluff, short-spoken old chap, with his heart in his work. Just now you'll find him at his worst—bitter and suspicious. The thought of swabbing down a lavatory and taking pennies all day is poisoning him."

"Naturally. Well, there we have honest Hutchins: taciturn, a little touchy perhaps, grown grey in the service of the company, and manifesting quite a bulldog-like devotion to his favourite 538."

"Why, that actually was the number of his engine—how do you know it?" demanded Carlyle sharply.

"It was mentioned two or three times at the inquest, Louis," replied Carrados mildly.

"And you remembered—with no reason to?"

"You can generally trust a blind man's memory, especially if he has taken the trouble to develop it."

"Then you will remember that Hutchins did not make a very good impression at the time. He was surly and irritable under the ordeal. I want you to see the case from all sides."

"He called the signalman—Mead—a 'lying young dog,' across the room, I believe. Now, Mead, what is he like? You have seen him, of course?"

"Yes. He does not impress me favourably. He is glib, ingratiating, and distinctly 'greasy.' He has a ready answer for everything almost before the question is out of your mouth. He has thought of everything."

"And now you are going to tell me something, Louis," said Carrados encouragingly.

Mr. Carlyle laughed a little to cover an involuntary movement of surprise.

"There is a suggestive line that was not touched at the inquiries," he admitted. "Hutchins has been a saving man all his life, and he has received good wages. Among his class he is regarded as wealthy. I daresay that he has five hundred pounds in the bank. He is a widower with one daughter, a very nice-mannered girl of about twenty. Mead is a young man, and he and the girl are sweet-hearts—have been informally engaged for some time. But old Hutchins would not hear of it; he seems to have taken a dislike to the signalman from the first, and latterly he had forbidden him to come to his house or his daughter to speak to him."

"Excellent, Louis," cried Carrados in great delight. "We shall clear your man in a blaze of red and green lights yet and hang the glib, 'greasy' signalman from his own signal-post."

"It is a significant fact, seriously?"

"It is absolutely convincing."

"It may have been a slip, a mental lapse on Mead's part which he discovered the moment it was too late, and then, being too cowardly to admit his fault, and having so much at stake, he took care to make detection impossible. It may have been that, but my idea is rather that probably it was neither quite pure accident nor pure design. I can imagine Mead meanly pluming himself over the fact that the life of this man who stands in his way, and whom he must cordially dislike, lies in his power. I can imagine the idea becoming an obsession as he dwells on it. A dozen times with his hand on the lever he lets his mind explore the possibilities of a moment's defection. Then one day he pulls the signal off in sheer bravado—and hastily puts it at danger again. He may have done it once or he may have done it oftener before he was caught in a

fatal moment of irresolution. The chances are about even that the engine-driver would be killed. In any case he would be disgraced, for it is easier on the face of it to believe that man might run past a danger signal in absentmindedness, without noticing it, than that a man should pull off a signal and replace it without being conscious of his actions."

"The fireman was killed. Does your theory involve the certainty of the fireman being killed, Louis?"

"No," said Carlyle. "The fireman is a difficulty, but looking at it from Mead's point of view—whether he has been guilty of an error or a crime—it resolves itself into this: First, the fireman may be killed. Second, he may not notice the signal at all. Third, in any case he will loyally corroborate his driver and the good old jury will discount that."

Carrados smoked thoughtfully, his open, sightless eyes merely appearing to be set in a tranquil gaze across the room.

"It would not be an improbable explanation," he said presently. "Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would say: 'People do not do these things.' But you and I, who have in our different ways studied criminology, know that they sometimes do, or else there would be no curious crimes. What have you done on that line?"

To anyone who could see, Mr. Carlyle's expression conveyed an answer.

"You are behind the scenes, Max. What was there for me to do? Still I must do something for my money. Well, I have had a very close inquiry made confidentially among the men. There might be a whisper of one of them knowing more than had come out—a man restrained by friendship, or enmity, or even grade jealousy. Nothing came of that. Then there was the remote chance that some private person had noticed the signal without attaching any importance to it then, one who would be able to identify it still by something associated with the time. I went over the line myself. Opposite the signal the line on one side is shut in by a high blank wall; on the other side are houses, but coming below the butt-end of a scullery the signal does not happen to be visible from any road or from any window."

"My poor Louis!" said Carrados, in friendly ridicule. "You were at the end of your tether?"

"I was," admitted Carlyle. "And now that you know the sort of job it is I don't suppose that you are keen on wasting your time over it."

"That would hardly be fair, would it?" said Carrados reasonably. "No, Louis, I will take over your honest old driver and your greasy young signalman and your fatal signal that cannot be seen from anywhere."

"But it is an important point for you to remember, Max, that although the signal cannot be seen from the box, if the mechanism had gone wrong, or anyone tampered with the arm, the automatic indicator would at once have told Mead that the green light was showing. Oh, I have gone very thoroughly into the technical points, I assure you."

"I must do so too," commented Mr. Carrados gravely.

"For that matter, if there is anything you want to know, I dare say that I can tell you," suggested his visitor. "It might save your time."

"True," acquiesced Carrados. "I should like to know whether anyone belonging to the houses that bound the line there came of age or got married on the twenty-sixth of November."

Mr. Carlyle looked across curiously at his host.

"I really do not know, Max," he replied, in his crisp, precise way. "What on earth has that got to do with it, may I inquire?"

"The only explanation of the Pont St. Lin swing-bridge disaster of '75 was the reflection of a green bengal light on a cottage window."

Mr. Carlyle smiled his indulgence privately.

"My dear chap, you mustn't let your retentive memory of obscure happenings run away with you," he remarked wisely. "In nine cases out of ten the obvious explanation is the true one. The difficulty, as here, lies in proving it. Now, you would like to see these men?"

"I expect so; in any case, I will see Hutchins first."

"Both live in Holloway. Shall I ask Hutchins to come here to see you—say tomorrow? He is doing nothing."

"No," replied Carrados. "Tomorrow I must call on my brokers and my time may be filled up."

"Quite right; you mustn't neglect your own affairs for this—experiment," assented Carlyle.

"Besides, I should prefer to drop in on Hutchins at his own home. Now, Louis, enough of the honest old man for one night. I have a lovely thing by Eumenes that I want to show you. Today is—Tuesday. Come to dinner on Sunday and pour the vials of your ridicule on my want of success."

"That's an amiable way of putting it," replied Carlyle. "All right, I will."

Two hours later Carrados was again in his study, apparently, for a wonder, sitting idle. Sometimes he smiled to himself, and once or twice he laughed a little, but for the most part his pleasant, impassive face reflected no emotion and he sat with his useless eyes tranquilly fixed on an unseen distance. It was a fantastic caprice of the man to mock his sightlessness by a parade of light,



and under the soft brilliance of a dozen electric brackets the room was as bright as day. At length he stood up and rang the bell.

"I suppose Mr. Greatorrex isn't still here by any chance, Parkinson?" he asked, referring to his secretary.

"I think not, sir, but I will ascertain," replied the man.

"Never mind. Go to his room and bring me the last two files of *The Times*. Now"—when he returned—"turn to the earliest you have there. The date?"

"November the second."

"That will do. Find the Money Market; it will be in the Supplement. Now look down the columns until you come to British Railways."

"I have it, sir."

"Central and Suburban. Read the closing price and the change."

"Central and Suburban Ordinary,  $66\frac{1}{2}$ – $67\frac{1}{2}$ , fall  $\frac{1}{8}$ . Preferred Ordinary,  $81$ – $81\frac{1}{2}$ , no change. Deferred Ordinary,  $27\frac{1}{2}$ – $27\frac{3}{4}$ , fall  $\frac{1}{4}$ . That is all, sir."

"Now take a paper about a week on. Read the Deferred only."

" $27$ – $27\frac{1}{4}$ , no change."

"Another week."

" $29\frac{1}{2}$ – $30$ , rise  $\frac{5}{8}$ ."

"Another."

" $31\frac{1}{2}$ – $32\frac{1}{2}$ , rise  $1$ ."

"Very good. Now on Tuesday the twenty-seventh November."

" $31\frac{1}{2}$ – $32\frac{3}{4}$ , rise  $\frac{1}{2}$ ."

"Yes. The next day."

" $24\frac{1}{2}$ – $23\frac{1}{2}$ , fall  $9$ ."

"Quite so, Parkinson. There had been an accident, you see."

"Yes, sir. Very unpleasant accident. Jane knows a person whose sister's young man has a cousin who had his arm torn off in it—torn off at the socket, she says, sir. It seems to bring it home to one, sir."

"That is all. Stay—in the paper you have, look down the first money column and see if there is any reference to the Central and Suburban."

"Yes, sir. 'City and Suburbans, which after their late depression on the projected extension of the motor bus service, had been steadily creeping up on the abandonment of the scheme, and as a result of their own excellent traffic returns, suffered a heavy slump through the lamentable accident of Thursday night. The Deferred in particular at one time fell eleven points as it was felt that the possible dividend, with which rumour has of late been busy, was now out of the question.'"

"Yes; that is all. Now you can take the papers back. And let it be

a warning to you, Parkinson, not to invest your savings in speculative railway deferreds."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir, I will endeavour to remember." He lingered for a moment as he shook the file of papers level. "I may say, sir, that I have my eye on a small block of cottage property at Acton. But even cottage property scarcely seems safe from legislative depredation now, sir."

The next day Mr. Carrados called on his brokers in the city. It is to be presumed that he got through his private business quicker than he expected, for after leaving Austin Friars he continued his journey to Holloway, where he found Hutchins at home and sitting morosely before his kitchen fire. Rightly assuming that his luxuriant car would involve him in a certain amount of public attention in Klondyke Street, the blind man dismissed it some distance from the house, and walked the rest of the way, guided by the almost imperceptible touch of Parkinson's arm.

"Here is a gentleman to see you, father," explained Miss Hutchins, who had come to the door. She divined the relative positions of the two visitors at a glance.

"Then why don't you take him into the parlour?" grumbled the ex-driver. His face was a testimonial of hard work and general sobriety but at the moment one might hazard from his voice and manner that he had been drinking earlier in the day.

"I don't think that the gentleman would be impressed by the difference between our parlour and our kitchen," replied the girl quaintly, "and it is warmer here."

"What's the matter with the parlour now?" demanded her father sourly. "It was good enough for your mother and me. It used to be good enough for you."

"There is nothing the matter with it, nor with the kitchen either." She turned impassively to the two who had followed her along the narrow passage. "Will you go in, sir?"

"I don't want to see no gentleman," cried Hutchins noisily. "Unless"—his manner suddenly changed to one of pitiable anxiety—"unless you're from the Company sir, to—to—"

"No; I have come on Mr. Carlyle's behalf," replied Carrados, walking to a chair as though he moved by a kind of instinct.

Hutchins laughed his wry contempt.

"Mr. Carlyle!" he reiterated; "Mr. Carlyle! Fat lot of good he's been. Why don't he *do* something for his money?"

"He has," replied Carrados, with imperturbable good-humour; "he has sent me. Now, I want to ask you a few questions."

"A few questions!" roared the irate man. "Why, blast it, I have done nothing else but answer questions for a month. I didn't pay

Mr. Carlyle to ask me questions; I can get enough of that for nixes. Why don't you go and ask Mr. Herbert Ananias Mead your few questions—then you might find out something."

There was a slight movement by the door and Carrados knew that the girl had quietly left the room.

"You saw that, sir?" demanded the father, diverted to a new line of bitterness. "You saw that girl—my own daughter, that I've worked for all her life?"

"No," replied Carrados.

"The girl that's just gone out—she's my daughter," explained Hutchins.

"I know, but I did not see her. I see nothing. I am blind."

"Blind!" exclaimed the old fellow, sitting up in startled wonderment. "You mean it, sir? You walk all right and you look at me as if you saw me. You're kidding surely."

"No," smiled Carrados. "It's quite right."

"Then it's a funny business, sir—you what are blind expecting to find something that those with their eyes couldn't," ruminated Hutchins sagely.

"There are things that you can't see with your eyes, Hutchins."

"Perhaps you are right, sir. Well, what is it you want to know?"

"Light a cigar first," said the blind man, holding out his case and waiting until the various sounds told him that his host was smoking contentedly. "The train you were driving at the time of the accident was the six-twenty-seven from Notcliff. It stopped everywhere until it reached Lambeth Bridge, the chief London station on your line. There it became something of an express, and leaving Lambeth Bridge at seven-eleven, should not stop again until it fetched Swanstead on Thames, eleven miles out, at seven-thirty-four. Then it stopped on and off from Swanstead to Ingerfield, the terminus of that branch, which it reached at eight-five."

Hutchins nodded, and then, remembering, said: "That's right, sir."

"That was your business all day—running between Notcliff and Ingerfield?"

"Yes, sir. Three journeys up and three down mostly."

"With the same stops on all the down journeys?"

"No. The seven-eleven is the only one that does a run from the Bridge to Swanstead. You see, it is just on the close of the evening rush, as they call it. A good many late business gentlemen living at Swanstead use the seven-eleven regular. The other journeys we stop at every station to Lambeth Bridge, and then here and there beyond."

"There are, of course, other trains doing exactly the same journey—a service, in fact."

"Yes, sir. About six."

"And do any of those—say, during the rush—do any of those run non-stop from Lambeth to Swanstead?"

Hutchins reflected a moment. All the choler and restlessness had melted out of the man's face. He was again the excellent artisan, slow but capable and self-reliant.

"That I couldn't definitely say, sir. Very few short-distance trains pass the junction, but some of those may. A guide would show us in a minute but I haven't got one."

"Never mind. You said at the inquest that it was no uncommon thing for you to be pulled up at the 'stop' signal east of Knight's Cross Station. How often would that happen—only with the seven-eleven, mind."

"Perhaps three times a week; perhaps twice."

"The accident was on a Thursday. Have you noticed that you were pulled up oftener on a Thursday than on any other day?"

A smile crossed the driver's face at the question.

"You don't happen to live at Swanstead yourself, sir?" he asked in reply.

"No," admitted Carrados. "Why?"

"Well, sir, we were *always* pulled up on Thursday; practically always, you may say. It got to be quite a saying among those who used the train regular; they used to look out for it."

Carrados's sightless eyes had the one quality of concealing emotion supremely. "Oh," he commented softly, "always; and it was quite a saying, was it? And *why* was it always so on Thursday?"

"It had to do with the early closing, I'm told. The suburban traffic was a bit different. By rights we ought to have been set back two minutes for that day, but I suppose it wasn't thought worthwhile to alter us in the time-table so we most always had to wait outside Three Deep tunnel for a west-bound electric to make good."

"You were prepared for it then?"

"Yes, sir, I was," said Hutchins, reddening at some recollection, "and very down about it was one of the jury over that. But, mayhap once in three months, I did get through even on a Thursday, and it's not for me to question whether things are right or wrong just because they are not what I may expect. The signals are my orders, sir—stop! go on! and it's for me to obey, as you would a general on the field of battle. What would happen otherwise! It was nonsense what they said about going cautious; and the man who stated it was a barber who didn't know the difference between a 'distance' and a 'stop' signal down to the minute they gave their verdict. My orders, sir, given me by that signal, was 'Go right ahead and keep to your running time!'"

Carrados nodded a soothing assent. "That is all, I think," he remarked.

"All!" exclaimed Hutchins in surprise. "Why, sir, you can't have got much idea of it yet."

"Quite enough. And I know it isn't pleasant for you to be taken along the same ground over and over again."

The man moved awkwardly in his chair and pulled nervously at his grizzled beard.

"You mustn't take any notice of what I said just now, sir," he apologized. "You somehow make me feel that something may come of it; but I've been badgered about and accused and cross-examined from one to another of them these weeks till it's fairly made me bitter against everything. And now they talk of putting me in a lavatory—me that has been with the company for five and forty years and on the foot-plate thirty-two—a man suspected of running past a danger signal."

"You have had a rough time, Hutchins; you will have to exercise your patience a little longer yet," said Carrados sympathetically.

"You think something may come of it, sir? You think you will be able to clear me? Believe me, sir, if you could give me something to look forward to it might save me from—" He pulled himself up and shook his head sorrowfully. "I've been near it," he added simply.

Carrados reflected and took his resolution.

"Today is Wednesday. I think you may hope to hear something from your general manager towards the middle of next week."

"Good God, sir! You really mean that?"

"In the interval show your good sense by behaving reasonably. Keep civilly to yourself and don't talk. Above all"—he nodded towards a quart jug that stood on the table between them, an incident that filled the simple-minded engineer with boundless wonder when he recalled it afterwards—"above all, leave that alone."

Hutchins snatched up the vessel and brought it crashing down on the hearthstone, his face shining with a set resolution.

"I've done with it, sir. It was the bitterness and despair that drove me to that. Now I can do without it."

The door was hastily opened and Miss Hutchins looked anxiously from her father to the visitors and back again.

"Oh, whatever is the matter?" she exclaimed. "I heard a great crash."

"This gentleman is going to clear me, Meg, my dear," blurted out the old man irrepressibly. "And I've done with the drink forever."

"Hutchins! Hutchins!" said Carrados warningly.

"My daughter, sir; you wouldn't have her not know?" pleaded Hutchins, rather crest-fallen. "It won't go any further."

Carrados laughed quietly to himself as he felt Margaret Hutchins's startled and questioning eyes attempting to read his mind. He shook hands with the engine-driver without further comment, however, and walked out into the commonplace little street under Parkinson's unobtrusive guidance.

"Very nice of Miss Hutchins to go into half-mourning, Parkinson," he remarked as they went along. "Thoughtful, and yet not ostentatious."

"Yes, sir," agreed Parkinson, who had long ceased to wonder at his master's perceptions.

"The Romans, Parkinson, had a saying to the effect that gold carries no smell. That is a pity sometimes. What jewellery did Miss Hutchins wear?"

"Very little, sir. A plain gold brooch representing a merry-thought—the merry-thought of a sparrow, I should say, sir. The only other article was a smooth-backed gun-metal watch, suspended from a gun-metal bow."

"Nothing showy or expensive, eh?"

"Oh dear no, sir. Quite appropriate for a young person of her position."

"Just what I should have expected." He slackened his pace. "We are passing a hoarding, are we not?"

"Yes, sir."

"We will stand here a moment. Read me the letterpress of the poster before us."

"This 'Oxo' one, sir?"

"Yes."

"'Oxo,' sir."

Carrados was convulsed with silent laughter. Parkinson had infinitely more dignity and conceded merely a tolerant recognition of the ludicrous.

"That was a bad shot, Parkinson," remarked his master when he could speak. "We will try another."

For three minutes, with scrupulous conscientiousness on the part of the reader and every appearance of keen interest on the part of the hearer, there were set forth the particulars of a sale by auction of superfluous timber and builders' material.

"That will do," said Carrados, when the last detail had been reached. "We can be seen from the door of No. 107 still?"

"Yes, sir."

"No indication of anyone coming to us from there?"

"No, sir."

Carrados walked thoughtfully on again. In the Holloway Road they rejoined the waiting motor-car.



"Lambeth Bridge Station" was the order the driver received.

From the station the car was sent on home and Parkinson was instructed to take two first-class singles for Richmond, which could be reached by changing at Stafford Road. The "evening rush" had not yet commenced and they had no difficulty in finding an empty carriage when the train came in.

Parkinson was kept busy that journey describing what he saw at various points between Lambeth Bridge and Knight's Cross. For a quarter of a mile Carrados's demands on the eyes and the memory of his remarkable servant were wide and incessant. Then his questions ceased. They had passed the "stop" signal, east of Knight's Cross Station.

The following afternoon they made the return journey as far as Knight's Cross. This time, however, the surroundings failed to interest Carrados. "We are going to look at some rooms," was the information he offered on the subject, and an imperturbable "Yes, sir" had been the extent of Parkinson's comment on the unusual proceeding. After leaving the station they turned sharply along a road that ran parallel with the line, a dull thoroughfare of substantial, elderly houses that were beginning to sink into decrepitude. Here and there a corner residence displayed the brass plate of a professional occupant, but for the most part they were given up to the various branches of second-rate apartment letting.

"The third house after the one with the flagstaff," said Carrados.

Parkinson rang the bell, which was answered by a young servant, who took an early opportunity of assuring them that she was not tidy as it was rather early in the afternoon. She informed Carrados, in reply to his inquiry, that Miss Chubb was at home, and showed them into a melancholy little sitting-room to await her appearance.

"I shall be 'almost' blind here, Parkinson," remarked Carrados, walking about the room. "It saves explanation."

"Very good, sir," replied Parkinson.

Five minutes later, an interval suggesting that Miss Chubb also found it rather early in the afternoon, Carrados was arranging to take rooms for his attendant and himself for the short time that he would be in London, seeing an oculist.

"One bedroom, mine, must face north," he stipulated. "It has to do with the light."

Miss Chubb replied that she quite understood. Some gentlemen, she added, had their requirements, others their fancies. She endeavoured to suit all. The bedroom she had in view from the first *did* face north. She would not have known, only the last gentleman, curiously enough, had made the same request.

"A sufferer like myself?" inquired Carrados affably.

Miss Chubb did not think so. In his case she regarded it merely as a fancy. He had said that he could not sleep on any other side. She had had to turn out of her own room to accommodate him, but if one kept an apartment-house one had to be adaptable; and Mr. Ghoosh was certainly very liberal in his ideas.

"Ghoosh? An Indian gentleman, I presume?" hazarded Carrados.

It appeared that Mr. Ghoosh was an Indian. Miss Chubb confided that at first she had been rather perturbed at the idea of taking in "a black man," as she confessed to regarding him. She reiterated, however, that Mr. Ghoosh proved to be "quite the gentleman." Five minutes of affability put Carrados in full possession of Mr. Ghoosh's manner of life and movements—the dates of his arrival and departure, his solitariness and his daily habits.

"This would be the best bedroom," said Miss Chubb.

It was a fair-sized room on the first floor. The window looked out on to the roof of an outbuilding; beyond, the deep cutting of the railway line. Opposite stood the dead wall that Mr. Carlyle had spoken of.

Carrados "looked" round the room with the discriminating glance that sometimes proved so embarrassing to those who knew him.

"I have to take a little daily exercise," he remarked, walking to the window and running his hand up the woodwork. "You will not mind my fixing a 'developer' here, Miss Chubb—a few small screws?"

Miss Chubb thought not. Then she was sure not. Finally she ridiculed the idea of minding with scorn.

"If there is width enough," mused Carrados, spanning the upright critically. "Do you happen to have a wooden foot-rule convenient?"

"Well, to be sure!" exclaimed Miss Chubb, opening a rapid succession of drawers until she produced the required article. "When we did out this room after Mr. Ghoosh, there was this very ruler among the things that he hadn't thought worth taking. This is what you require, sir?"

"Yes," replied Carrados, accepting it, "I think this is exactly what I require." It was a common new white-wood rule, such as one might buy at any small stationer's for a penny. He carelessly took off the width of the upright, reading the figures with a touch; and then continued to run a fingertip delicately up and down the edges of the instrument.

"Four and seven-eighths," was his unspoken conclusion.

"I hope it will do sir."

"Admirably," replied Carrados. "But I haven't reached the end of my requirements yet, Miss Chubb."

"No, sir?" said the landlady, feeling that it would be a pleasure to oblige so agreeable a gentleman, "what else might there be?"

"Although I can see very little I like to have a light, but not any kind of light. Gas I cannot do with. Do you think that you would be able to find me an oil lamp?"

"Certainly, sir. I got out a very nice brass lamp that I have specially for Mr. Ghosh. He read a good deal of an evening and he preferred a lamp."

"That is very convenient. I suppose it is large enough to burn for a whole evening?"

"Yes, indeed. And very particular he was always to have it filled every day."

"A lamp without oil is not very useful," smiled Carrados, following her towards another room, and absent-mindedly slipping the foot-rule into his pocket.

Whatever Parkinson thought of the arrangement of going into second-rate apartments in an obscure street it is to be inferred that his devotion to his master was sufficient to overcome his private emotions as a self-respecting "man." At all events, as they were approaching the station he asked, and without a trace of feeling, whether there were any orders for him with reference to the proposed migration.

"None, Parkinson," replied his master. "We must be satisfied with our present quarters."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Parkinson, with some constraint. "I understand that you had taken the rooms for a week certain."

"I am afraid that Miss Chubb will be under the same impression. Unforeseen circumstances will prevent our going, however. Mr. Greatorrex must write tomorrow, enclosing a cheque, with my regrets, and adding a penny for this ruler which I seem to have brought away with me. It, at least, is something for the money."

Parkinson may be excused for not attempting to understand the course of events.

"Here is your train coming in, sir," he merely said.

"We will let it go and wait for another. Is there a signal at either end of the platform?"

"Yes, sir; at the further end."

"Let us walk towards it. Are there any of the porters or officials about here?"

"No, sir; none."

"Take this ruler. I want you to go up the steps—there are steps up the signal, by the way?"

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to measure the glass of the lamp. Do not go up any

higher than is necessary, but if you have to stretch be careful not to mark off the measurement with your nail, although the impulse is a natural one. That has been done already."

Parkinson looked apprehensively round and about. Fortunately the part was a dark and unfrequented spot and everyone else was moving towards the exit at the other end of the platform. Fortunately, also, the signal was not a high one.

"As near as I can judge on the rounded surface, the glass is four and seven-eighths across," reported Parkinson.

"Thank you," replied Carrados, returning the measure to his pocket, "four and seven-eighths is quite near enough. Now we will take the next train back."

Sunday evening came, and with it Mr. Carlyle to The Turrets at the appointed hour. He brought to the situation a mind poised for any eventuality and a trenchant eye. As the time went on and the impenetrable Carrados made no allusion to the case, Carlyle's manner inclined to a waggish commiseration of his host's position. Actually, he said little, but the crisp precision of his voice when the path lay open to a remark of any significance left little to be said.

It was not until they had finished dinner and returned to the library that Carrados gave the slightest hint of anything unusual being in the air. His first indication of coming events was to remove the key from the outside to the inside of the door.

"What are you doing, Max?" demanded Mr. Carlyle, his curiosity overcoming the indirect attitude.

"You have been very entertaining, Louis," replied his friend, "but Parkinson should be back very soon now and it is as well to be prepared. Do you happen to carry a revolver?"

"Not when I come to dine with you, Max," replied Carlyle, with all the aplomb he could muster. "Is it usual?"

Carrados smiled affectionately at his guest's agile recovery and touched the secret spring of a drawer in an antique bureau by his side. The little hidden receptacle shot smoothly out, disclosing a pair of dull-blued pistols.

"Tonight, at all events, it might be prudent," he replied, handing one to Carlyle and putting the other into his own pocket. "Our man may be here at any minute, and we do not know in what temper he will come."

"Our man!" exclaimed Carlyle, craning forward in excitement. "Max! You don't mean to say that you have got Mead to admit it?"

"No one has admitted it," said Carrados. "And it is not Mead."

"Not Mead. . . . Do you mean that Hutchins—?"

"Neither Mead nor Hutchins. The man who tampered with the signal—for Hutchins was right and a green light *was* exhibited—

is a young Indian from Bengal. His name is Drishna and he lives at Swanstead."

Mr. Carlyle stared at his friend between sheer surprise and blank incredulity.

"You really mean this, Carrados?" he said.

"My fatal reputation for humour!" smiled Carrados. "If I am wrong, Louis, the next hour will expose it."

"But why—why—why? The colossal villainy, the unparalleled audacity!" Mr. Carlyle lost himself among incredulous superlatives and could only stare.

"Chiefly to get himself out of a disastrous speculation," replied Carrados, answering the question. "If there was another motive—or at least an incentive—which I suspect, doubtless we shall hear of it."

"All the same, Max, I don't think that you have treated me quite fairly," protested Carlyle, getting over his first surprise and passing to a sense of injury. "Here we are and I know nothing, absolutely nothing, of the whole affair."

"We both have our ideas of pleasantry, Louis," replied Carrados genially. "But I dare say you are right and perhaps there is still time to atone." In the fewest possible words he outlined the course of his investigations. "And now you know all that is to be known until Drishna arrives."

"But will he come?" questioned Carlyle doubtfully. "He may be suspicious."

"Yes, he will be suspicious."

"Then he will not come."

"On the contrary, Louis, he will come because my letter will make him suspicious. He is coming; otherwise Parkinson would have telephoned me at once and we should have had to take other measures."

"What did you say, Max?" asked Carlyle curiously.

"I wrote that I was anxious to discuss an Indo-Scythian inscription with him, and sent my car in the hope that he would be able to oblige me."

"But is he interested in Indo-Scythian inscriptions?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," admitted Carrados, and Mr. Carlyle was throwing up his hands in despair when the sound of a motor-car wheels softly kissing the gravel surface of the drive outside brought him to his feet.

"By Gad, you are right, Max!" he exclaimed, peeping through the curtains. "There is a man inside."

"Mr. Drishna," announced Parkinson a minute later.

The visitor came into the room with leisurely self-possession that might have been real or a desperate assumption. He was a

slightly built young man of about twenty-five, with black hair and eyes, a small, carefully trained moustache, and a dark olive skin. His physiognomy was not displeasing, but his expression had a harsh and supercilious tinge. In attire he erred towards the immaculately spruce.

"Mr. Carrados?" he said inquiringly.

Carrados, who had risen, bowed slightly without offering his hand.

"This gentleman," he said, indicating his friend, "is Mr. Carlyle, the celebrated private detective."

The Indian shot a very sharp glance at the object of this description. Then he sat down.

"You wrote me a letter, Mr. Carrados," he remarked, in English that scarcely betrayed any foreign origin, "a rather curious letter, I may say. You asked me about an ancient inscription. I know nothing of antiquities; but I thought, as you had sent, that it would be more courteous if I came and explained this to you."

"That was the object of my letter," replied Carrados.

"You wished to see me?" said Dishna, unable to stand the ordeal of the silence that Carrados imposed after his remark.

"When you left Miss Chubb's house you left a ruler behind." One lay on the desk by Carrados and he took it up as he spoke.

"I don't understand what you are talking about," said Drishna guardedly. "You are making some mistake."

"The ruler was marked at four and seven-eighths inches—the measure of the glass of the signal lamp outside."

The unfortunate young man was unable to repress a start. His face lost its healthy tone. Then, with a sudden impulse, he made a step forward and snatched the object from Carrados's hand.

"If it is mine I have a right to it," he exclaimed, snapping the ruler in two and throwing it on to the back of the blazing fire. "It is nothing."

"Pardon me, I did not say that the one you have so impetuously disposed of was yours. As a matter of fact, it was mine. Yours is—elsewhere."

"Wherever it is you have no right to it if it is mine," panted Drishna, with rising excitement. "You are a thief, Mr. Carrados. I will not stay any longer here."

He jumped up and turned towards the door. Carlyle made a step forward, but the precaution was unnecessary.

"One moment, Mr. Drishna," interposed Carrados, in his smoothest tones. "It is a pity, after you have come so far, to leave without hearing of my investigations in the neighbourhood of Shaftesbury Avenue."

Drishna sat down again.

"As you like," he muttered. "It does not interest me."

"I wanted to obtain a lamp of a certain pattern," continued Carrados. "It seemed to me that the simplest explanation would be to say that I wanted it for a motor-car. Naturally I went to Long Acre. At the first shop I said: 'Wasn't it here that a friend of mine, an Indian gentleman, recently had a lamp made with a green glass that was nearly five inches across?' No, it was not there but they could make me one. At the next shop the same; at the third, and fourth, and so on. Finally my persistence was rewarded. I found the place where the lamp had been made, and at the cost of ordering another I obtained all the details I wanted. It was news to them, the shopman informed me, that in some parts of India green was the danger colour and therefore tail lamps had to show a green light. The incident made some impression on him and he would be able to identify their customer—who paid in advance and gave no address—among a thousand of his countrymen. Do I succeed in interesting you, Mr. Drishna?"

"Do you?" replied Drishna, with a languid yawn. "Do I look interested?"

"You must make allowance for my unfortunate blindness," apologized Carrados, with grim irony.

"Blindness!" exclaimed Drishna, dropping his affectation of unconcern as though electrified by the word, "do you mean—really blind—that you do not see me?"

"Alas, no," admitted Carrados.

The Indian withdrew his right hand from his coat pocket and with a tragic gesture flung a heavy revolver down on the table between them.

"I have had you covered all the time, Mr. Carrados, and if I had wished to go and you or your friend had raised a hand to stop me, it would have been at the peril of your lives," he said, in a voice of melancholy triumph. "But what is the use of defying fate, and who successfully evades his destiny? A month ago I went to see one of our people who reads the future and sought to know the course of certain events. 'You need fear no human eye,' was the message given to me. Then she added: 'But when the sightless sees the unseen, make your peace with Yama.' And I thought she spoke of the Great Hereafter!"

"This amounts to an admission of your guilt," exclaimed Mr. Carlyle practically.

"I bow to the decree of fate," replied Drishna. "And it is fitting to the universal irony of existence that a blind man should be the instrument. I don't imagine, Mr. Carlyle," he added maliciously,



"that you, with your eyes, would ever have brought that result about."

"You are a very cold-blooded young scoundrel, sir!" retorted Mr. Carlyle. "Good heavens! Do you realize that you are responsible for the death of scores of innocent men and women?"

"Do you realize, Mr. Carlyle, that you and your Government and your soldiers are responsible for the death of thousands of innocent men and women in my country every day? If England was occupied by the Germans who quartered an army and an administration with their wives and their families and all their expensive paraphernalia on the unfortunate country until the whole nation was reduced to the verge of famine, and the appointment of every new official meant the callous death sentence on a thousand men and women to pay his salary, then if you went to Berlin and wrecked a train you would be hailed a patriot. What Boadicea did and—and Samson, so have I. If they were heroes, so am I."

"Well, upon my word!" cried the highly scandalized Carlyle, "what next! Boadicea was a—er—semi-legendary person, whom we may possibly admire at a distance. Personally, I do not profess to express an opinion. But Samson, I would remind you, is a Biblical character. Samson was mocked as an enemy. You, I do not doubt, have been entertained as a friend."

"And haven't I been mocked and despised and sneered at every day of my life here by your supercilious, superior, empty-headed men?" flashed back Drishna, his eyes leaping into malignity and his voice trembling with sudden passion. "Oh! How I hated them as I passed them in the street and recognized by a thousand petty insults their lordly English contempt for me as an inferior being—a nigger. How I longed with Caligula that a nation had a single neck that I might destroy it at one blow. I loathe you in your complacent hypocrisy, Mr. Carlyle, despise and utterly abominate you from an eminence of superiority that you can never even understand."

"I think we are getting rather away from the point, Mr. Drishna," interposed Carrados, with the impartiality of a judge. "Unless I am misinformed, you are not so ungallant as to include everyone you have met here in your execration?"

"Ah, no," admitted Drishna, descending into a quite ingenuous frankness. "Much as I hate your men I love your women. How it possible that a nation should be so divided—its men so dull-witted and offensive, its women so quick, sympathetic and capable of appreciating?"

"But a little expensive, too, at times?" suggested Carrados. Drishna sighed heavily.

"Yes; it is incredible. It is the generosity of their large nature. My

allowance, though what most of you would call noble, has proved quite inadequate. I was compelled to borrow money and the interest became overwhelming. Bankruptcy was impracticable because I should have then been recalled by my people, and much as I detest England a certain reason made the thought of leaving it unbearable."

"Connected with the Arcady Theatre?"

"You know? Well, do not let us introduce the lady's name. In order to restore myself I speculated on the Stock Exchange. My credit was good through my father's position and the standing of the firm to which I am attached. I heard on reliable authority, and very early, that the Central and Suburban, and the Deferred especially, was safe to fall heavily, through a motor bus amalgamation that was then a secret. I opened a bear account and sold largely. The shares fell, but only fractionally, and I waited. Then, unfortunately, they began to go up. Adverse forces were at work and rumours were put about. I could not stand the settlement, and in order to carry over an account I was literally compelled to deal temporarily with some securities that were not technically my own property."

"Embezzlement, sir," commented Mr. Carlyle icily. "But what is embezzlement on the top of wholesale murder!"

"That is what it is called. In my case, however, it was only to be temporary. Unfortunately, the rise continued. Then, at the height of my despair, I chanced to be returning to Swanstead rather earlier than usual one evening, and the train was stopped at a certain signal to let another pass. There was conversation in the carriage and I learned certain details. One said that there would be an accident some day, and so forth. In a flash—as by an inspiration—I saw how the circumstance might be turned to account. A bad accident and the shares would certainly fall and my position would be retrieved. I think Mr. Carrados has somehow learned the rest."

"Max," said Mr. Carlyle, with emotion, "is there any reason why you should not send your man for a police officer and have this monster arrested on his own confession without further delay?"

"Pray do so, Mr. Carrados," acquiesced Drishna. "I shall certainly be hanged, but the speech I shall prepare will ring from one end of India to the other; my memory will be venerated as that of a martyr; and the emancipation of my motherland will be hastened by my sacrifice."

"In other words," commented Carrados, "there will be disturbances at half-a-dozen disaffected places, a few unfortunate police will be clubbed to death, and possibly worse things may happen. That does not suit us, Mr. Drishna."

"And how do you propose to prevent it?" asked Drishna, with cool assurance.

"It is very unpleasant being hanged on a dark winter morning; very cold, very friendless, very inhuman. The long trial, the solitude and the confinement, the thoughts of the long sleepless night before, the hangman and the pinioning and the noosing of the rope are apt to prey on the imagination. Only a very stupid man can take hanging easily."

"What do you want me to do instead, Mr. Carrados?" asked Drishna shrewdly.

Carrados's hand closed on the weapon that still lay on the table between them. Without a word he pushed it across.

"I see," commented Drishna, with a short laugh and a gleaming eye. "Shoot myself and hush it up to suit your purpose. Withhold my message to save the exposures of a trial, and keep the flame from the torch of insurrectionary freedom."

"Also," interposed Carrados mildly, "to save your worthy people a good deal of shame, and to save the lady who is nameless the unpleasant necessity of relinquishing the house and the income which you have just settled on her. She certainly would not then venerate your memory."

"What is that?"

"The transaction which you carried through was based on a felony and could not be upheld. The firm you dealt with will go to the courts, and the money, being directly traceable, will be held forfeit as no good consideration passed."

"Max!" cried Mr. Carlyle hotly, "you are not going to let this scoundrel cheat the gallows after all?"

"The best use you can make of the gallows is to cheat it, Louis," replied Carrados. "Have you ever reflected what human beings will think of us a hundred years hence?"

"Oh, of course I'm not really in favour of hanging," admitted Mr. Carlyle.

"Nobody really is. But we go on hanging. Mr. Drishna is a dangerous animal who for the sake of pacific animals must cease to exist. Let his barbarous exploits pass into oblivion with him. The disadvantages of spreading it broadcast immeasurably outweigh the benefits."

"I have considered," announced Drishna. "I will do as you wish."

"Very well," said Carrados. "Here is some plain notepaper. You had better write a letter to someone saying that the financial difficulties in which you are involved make life unbearable."

"But there are no financial difficulties—now."

"That does not matter in the least. It will be put down to an

hallucination and taken as showing the state of your mind."

"But what guarantee have we that he will not escape?" whispered Mr. Carlyle.

"He cannot escape," replied Carrados tranquilly. "His identity is too clear."

"I have no intention of trying to escape," put in Drishna, as he wrote. "You hardly imagine that I have not considered this eventuality, do you?"

"All the same," murmured the ex-lawyer, "I should like to have a jury behind me. It is one thing to execute a man morally; it is another to do it almost literally."


"Is that all right?" asked Drishna, passing across the letter he had written.

Carrados smiled at this tribute to his perception.

"Quite excellent," he replied courteously. "There is a train at nine-forty. Will that suit you?"

Drishna nodded and stood up. Mr. Carlyle had a very uneasy feeling that he ought to do something but could not suggest to himself what.

The next moment he heard his friend heartily thanking the visitor for the assistance he had been in the matter of the Indo-Scythian inscription, as they walked across the hall together. Then a door closed.

"I believe that there is something positively uncanny about Max at times," murmured the perturbed gentleman to himself. 

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## FOG-GET IT!

### ART COSING

It was not a happy set. The special effects team, six technicians headed by Steve Armstrong, was particularly nervous. Director Otto Pressman, a notorious taskmaster with a venomous temper, was late in arriving to inspect the second fog rehearsal for the first scene of *Revenge of the Swamp Predators*.

Without taking off his jacket or dropping his attaché case, Pressman began shouting as he toured the fog-shrouded soundstage.

"No, no!" Pressman screamed. "The scene calls for heavy fog off the swamp! You call this fog? I could get more convincing fog from a tea kettle! You're fired! You, your crew, and their wimpy fog blowers! Get off my set."

"Don't kid yourself," Steve said. "My men are professionals, specialists with technical know-how. The chemistry that goes into a convincing fog mixture is a trade secret, not for amateurs."

Pressman scoffed. "How difficult can it be? Leave the ingredients and the rented blowers in place. I will personally take on the task of beefing up the formula to my standards. Clear the set."

"As you will," Steve said. "Give me a minute with my crew, and I'll bring you a write-up with the fog formula we use."

"Did you really give him our formula, Steve?" one of the techs asked as they exited the soundstage, leaving Pressman alone.

"I did better than that," Steve said. "I left him three formulas: one for fog, one for chlorine gas, and one for mustard gas. Let him figure it out."



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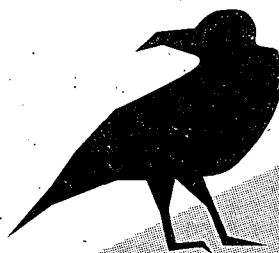
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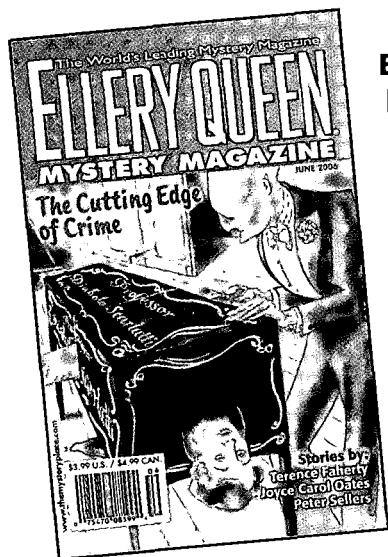
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